

**THE ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS
GRANT PROGRAM: A VIEW
FROM UPSTATE NEW YORK**

FIELD HEARING
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

JUNE 21, 2004

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**THE ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS GRANT
PROGRAM: A VIEW FROM UPSTATE NEW
YORK**

MONDAY, JUNE 21, 2004

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to call, at 12:35 p.m., at the Auburn Fire Department, 23 Market Street, Auburn, New York, Hon. Sherwood Boehlert presiding.

**COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

***The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program: A View From Upstate
New York***

Monday, June 21, 2004
12:30 p.m.-2:30 p.m.
Auburn Fire Department, 23 Market Street, Auburn, NY 13021

Witness List

Mr. R. David Paulison
U.S. Fire Administrator and
Director, Preparedness Division, Emergency Preparedness & Response
Directorate/Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
(Mr. Paulison will be accompanied by Mr. Brian Cowan, Director, Assistance to
Firefighters Program for DHS)

Mr. Michael Quill
Chief
Auburn Fire Department

Mr. Brian McQueen
Chief
Whitesboro Volunteer Fire Department

Mr. David Perkins
Training Officer
Aurelius Volunteer Fire Department

Mr. Pat DiNonno
Director, Office of Emergency Management and Fire Coordinator
Cayuga County, New York

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HEARING CHARTER

**COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**The Assistance to Firefighters
Grant Program: A View
From Upstate New York**

MONDAY, JUNE 21, 2004
12:30 P.M.–2:30 P.M.
AUBURN, NEW YORK FIRE DEPARTMENT

1. Purpose

On Monday, June 21st, 2004, the House Science Committee will hold a field hearing to examine the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFGP) and its impact on the fire departments of upstate New York. The hearing will also consider legislation (H.R. 4107, the *Assistance to Firefighters Grant Reauthorization Act of 2004*) introduced by Chairman Boehlert to authorize continued funding for the AFGP through fiscal year (FY) 2007.

2. Witnesses

Mr. R. David Paulison is the U.S. Fire Administrator and Director of the Preparedness Division of the Emergency Preparedness & Response Directorate/FEMA in the Department of Homeland Security. Prior to his appointment as U.S. Fire Administrator in December 2001, he was chief of the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department. Administrator Paulison will be accompanied by **Mr. Brian Cowan**, Director of the Assistance to Firefighters Program for the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Domestic Preparedness (ODP).

Mr. Michael Quill is the Chief of the Auburn, New York Fire Department. The Auburn Fire Department serves a population of 29,000 and is staffed by approximately 70 career firefighters.

Mr. David Perkins is the Assistant Chief of the Aurelius Volunteer Fire Department in Auburn, New York. The Aurelius Fire Department serves a population of 3,200 permanent residents and is staffed by approximately 60 volunteer firefighters.

Mr. Brian McQueen is the Chief of the Whitesboro, New York Volunteer Fire Department. The Whitesboro fire department serves the village of Whitesboro and part of the town of Whitestown, and is staffed by 63 firefighters.

Mr. Pat DiNonno is the Fire Coordinator and Director of the Office of Emergency Management for Cayuga County New York.

3. Overarching Questions

The hearing will address the following overarching questions:

1. How effective has the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFGP) been at improving the overall level of readiness of fire departments in upstate New York? How has the program evolved since its inception in 2000? What level of need still exists with regard to the ability of departments in this area to respond to day-to-day hazards, and in what areas are the gaps greatest?
2. How do upstate New York fire departments view H.R. 4107 and the AFGP, and what recommendations do they have for improving the legislation?
3. How does USFA interact directly with fire departments across the country to respond to their needs and concerns, and how might fire departments around the country take better advantage of USFA programs and services?

4. Brief Overview

- In 2000, Congress established the AFGP in the U.S. Fire Administration to award grants directly to local fire departments to protect "the health and safety of the public and firefighting personnel against fire and fire-related

hazards, and to provide assistance for fire prevention programs.” (The current authorization expires at the end of FY 2004.)

- Since 2001, the AFGP has distributed \$1.1 billion to nearly 17,000 fire departments around the country. In the current FY 2004 grant year, \$750 million was appropriated. Approximately 20,400 departments applied, requesting \$2.3 billion in equipment, training, vehicles, and other support. The first round of awards were announced on June 4th. Continued award announcements are expected on a weekly basis from now through the end of the year. In the FY 2005 budget, the Bush Administration has requested \$500 million for the program.¹
- From its inception until FY 2003, the AFGP was administered by USFA. For the first time this year, the program is being administered by ODP as a result of language included in the FY 2004 appropriation bill for the Department of Homeland Security. Many in the fire services and Congress have voiced concern that this transfer could shift the focus of the program toward state-administered counter-terrorism assistance and away from providing direct assistance on a competitive basis to fire departments for the purpose of improving basic firefighting capabilities.
- On April 1st 2004, Chairman Boehlert and a bipartisan group of Congressional Fire Services Caucus leaders introduced H.R. 4107, the *Assistance to Firefighters Grant Reauthorization Act of 2004*. The bill would authorize \$900 million per year for the program in fiscal years 2005–2007. While H.R. 4107 continues the AFGP mostly unchanged, it does make several programmatic modifications, including:
 - *Program Location*. Transfers authority for administering the AFGP from ODP to USFA.
 - *EMS Eligibility*. Allows volunteer non-profit, non-hospital Emergency Medical Service (EMS) squads not affiliated with fire departments to apply for grants. The bill would set a cap on the amount of funds those entities could collectively receive at four percent of the total appropriation for the program.
 - *Non-federal Match*. Reduces from 30 percent to 20 percent the non-federal matching requirement to receive a grant for jurisdictions that serve more than 50,000 people.
 - *Maximum Grant Size*. Increases the grant-size cap from \$750,000 to \$3 million for jurisdictions that serve more than one million people, \$2 million for jurisdictions that serve between one million and 500,000 people, and \$1 million for all other departments.
 - *Volunteer Non-Discrimination*. Specifies that departments that receive funding under this Act cannot discriminate against, or prohibit employees from engaging in, volunteer firefighting activities in another jurisdiction during off-duty hours.
 - *Peer Review*. Codifies USFA’s current practices of consulting with fire service organizations in considering criteria changes to the AFGP and appointing fire service personnel to conduct peer review of applications.
- The legislation has been endorsed by the New York State Fireman’s Association, National Volunteer Fire Council, National Fire Protection Association, and National Association of Towns and Townships.

5. Background on USFA

America’s Fire Problem

In the early 1970’s, a report by the President’s National Commission on Fire Prevention and Control entitled *America Burning* presented a dismal assessment of fire safety in the United States. The report found that nearly 12,000 citizens and 250 firefighters were lost to fire annually, in addition to approximately 300,000 injuries.

When the USFA was established by Congress in 1974, its goal was to reduce by half the number of fire-related fatalities in the Nation—bringing the number to approximately 6,000 or less per year within a generation. The agency met this goal, and by 1998 civilian fire deaths were at their lowest level. Additionally, using nearly

¹On June 9th, 2004, the House Committee on Appropriations passed the FY 2005 spending bill for the Department of Homeland Security. The legislation provides \$600 million for the AFGP, \$100 million above the President’s request and \$150 million below the FY 2004 level.

any measure—number of fires, deaths, injuries, or property losses—the statistics also reflect a declining trend.

Despite this significant progress, the United States still has one of the worst fire safety records in the industrialized world. The per capita death rate remains two to three times that of several European nations and at least 20 percent higher than most developed countries. Fire remains the cause of approximately 3,700 deaths and \$11 billion in economic damages each year, and every 18 seconds a fire department responds to a call somewhere in the United States.

USFA Programs

In addition to supporting the AFGP, USFA programs include the following:

Data Collection—USFA's National Fire Data Center (NFDC) administers a national system for collecting, analyzing and disseminating data and information on fire and other emergency incidents to State and local governments and the fire community. The NFDC provides a national analysis of the fire problem, identifying problem areas for which prevention and mitigation strategies are needed.

Public Education and Awareness—Through partnerships and special initiatives, USFA involves the fire service, the media, other federal agencies and safety interest groups in the development and delivery of fire safety awareness and education programs. These programs are targeted at those groups most vulnerable to the hazards of fire, including the young, elderly, and disabled. For example, USFA recently announced the development of an aggressive plan to advocate increased use of residential fire sprinklers, which have become significantly more effective and less costly due to new technology, but are installed in only a very small percentage of homes.

Training—USFA's National Fire Academy offers educational opportunities for the advanced professional development of mid-level and senior fire and emergency medical service officers and allied professionals involved in fire prevention and life safety activities. In 2002, the Academy trained almost 8,000 firefighters in various courses at Academy headquarters in Emmitsburg, 86,000 firefighters through off-campus training programs (primarily administered through support of state training programs), and 195,000 through its distance-learning program. It is estimated that NFA has trained over 1.4 million students through on-campus and off-campus training programs since its establishment in 1975.

Budget—The President's FY 2005 budget request for USFA "core activities" (those not including the AFGP) does not specify a level of funding for USFA. However, the FY 2004 request was \$61.0 million, a 49 percent increase above the FY 2003 request. Last November, the President signed legislation reauthorizing USFA activities through FY 2008, including \$63 million for FY 2005 (P.L. 108-169).

6. Questions for Witnesses

Witnesses were asked to address the following questions in their testimony:

Questions for Mr. Paulison

- How effective has the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program been at improving the overall level of readiness of emergency responders in the United States? How has the program evolved since its inception in 2001 to better meet its charge of helping fire departments improve their ability to respond to day-to-day hazards? What needs still exist, and in what areas are the gaps the greatest?
- How is the Department of Homeland Security—and USFA in particular—working to balance support for basic first responder needs with support for counterterrorism preparedness?
- What is the status of traditional USFA activities such as public education and outreach, fire research and data analysis, and National Fire Academy training programs? How does USFA interact directly with fire departments across the country to respond to their needs and concerns, and how might fire departments around the country take better advantage of USFA programs and services?

Questions for Mr. McQueen, Mr. Perkins, and Mr. Quill

- How has your department's ability to prepare for and respond to emergencies been impacted by the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program? What needs still exist at your department with regard to its ability to effectively respond to day-to-day hazards, and what is your impression of the overall level of readiness of other departments in your region of upstate New York?
- What are the appropriate roles of Federal, State, and local governments in helping your department meet its responsibilities to protect the public from

fires and related hazards? In what ways can the Federal Government in particular improve its support for fire departments like yours?

- In what ways has your department interacted with USFA and other agencies within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)? In your experience, how effective have these agencies been at delivering support through activities other than the fire grant program (i.e., training, education, outreach, etc.)? Please provide any recommendations you have for improving these activities within DHS.

Questions for Mr. DiNonno

- How does your office coordinate with Cayuga County fire departments? What issues are presenting the greatest challenges for first responders (including police, EMS, and others) in your area, and what are the most pressing needs in terms of equipment, staffing, training, communication, etc.?
- What are the appropriate roles of Federal, State, and local governments in helping your office meet its responsibilities to protect the public? In what ways can the Federal Government, in particular the Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Fire Administration, improve its support for offices like yours?
- How should the Federal Government balance support for counter-terrorism activities with that of more traditional first responder programs?

7. Appendix I

SECTION-BY-SECTION SUMMARY OF H.R. 4107, ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS GRANT REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2004

Sec. 1. Short Title.

“Assistance to Firefighters Grant Reauthorization Act of 2004”.

Sec. 2. Findings.

Contains 27 Findings describing fire department needs and other relevant fire statistics.

Sec. 3. Amendments.

Amends Section 33 of the Federal Fire Prevention Control act of 1974 (15 U.S.C. 2229), which authorizes the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFGP), making the following changes:

- (1) Strikes [FEMA] “Director” each place it appears and replaces with [USFA] “Administrator”.
- (2) Expands upon authority to make grants to fire departments to also include “volunteer emergency medical service squads”.
- (3) Expands authority to provide assistance for fire prevention programs under the program to include assistance for “firefighter safety research and development”.
- (4) Expands upon eligible use of grant funds to include emergency medical services provided by volunteer EMS squads that are not affiliated with a fire department, hospital, or any for-profit entity.
- (5) Amends subsection on Fire prevention programs to—
 - (A) Expand the title to “Fire prevention and firefighter safety research and development”;
 - (B) Clarify that fire departments cannot apply for grants under this subsection.
 - (C) Expand priority consideration under this subsection to include organizations that focus on prevention of injuries “to high-risk groups from fire, as well as research programs that demonstrate the potential to improve firefighter safety”.
- (6) Amends subsection on matching requirements to
 - reduce the non-federal match for departments serving jurisdictions of greater than 50,000 people from 30 percent to 20 percent; and
 - clarify the Fire prevention grants shall not have a matching requirement.
- (7) Amends subsection on grant size limitation to provide that—
 - (A) The total amount a grant recipient may receive is increased from \$750,000 to
 - \$1,000,000 for departments that serve a jurisdiction with 500,000 people or less;
 - \$2,000,000 for departments that serve a jurisdiction of 500,000 to 1,000,000 people; and
 - \$3,000,000 for departments that serve a jurisdiction with more than 1,000,000 people. The bill also provides that, upon showing sufficient need, a jurisdiction serving a number of people near the threshold may receive funding up to the next higher level.
 - (B) Re-designates subparagraph (B) as subparagraph (C);
 - (C) Provides that “no single recipient may receive more than one half of one percent of the funds appropriated under this section for a single fiscal year”; and
 - (D) Requires that not more than four percent of the funds appropriated to provide grants may be collectively awarded to volunteer medical service squads.”
- (8) Codifies current grant program practice regarding annual criteria development and peer-review process. Also adds at the end the following new paragraph on discrimination of volunteer firefighters:

“(16) Protection of volunteers from discrimination—A fire department receiving funds provided under this section shall not discriminate against, or prohibit its

members from engaging in, volunteer activities in another jurisdiction during off-duty hours.”

- (9) Authorizes annual appropriations of \$900 million for the program through fiscal year 2007.

Sec. 4. Reports.

- (a) Study on Need for Federal Assistance to State and Local Communities to Fund Firefighting and Emergency Response Activities—Directs the Administrator to—
 - (1) reconduct the study required under section 1701(b) of the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001, in conjunction with the National Fire Protection Association, to—
 - (A) define the current role and activities associated with the fire services;
 - (B) analyze the extent to which grant awards fulfill the goals of applicants; and
 - (C) provide a needs assessment to identify shortfalls.
 - (2) express the needs assessment under subparagraph (A)(iii) on a national and State-by-State basis; and
 - (3) measure the impact the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program under section 33 of the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 has had in meeting the shortfalls identified in the original report conducted under such section 1701(b).
- (b) Time for Completion of Study; Report—Directs the Administrator to complete the study under subsection (a), and submit a report on the results of the study to Congress, not later than 18 months after the date of the enactment of this Act.
- (c) Authorization of Appropriations—Authorized to be appropriated to the United States Fire Administration \$300,000 for fiscal year 2005 to carry out the study required by subsection (a).

8. APPENDIX II

FY 2003 AFGP Grants Awarded to Fire Departments in New York's 24TH Congressional District

FIRE DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT AWARDED (\$)	FIRE DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT AWARDED (\$)
Auburn	13,065	Oriskany Falls	43,380
Auburn	162,090	Oxford	128,358
Aurelius	119,804	Pittsfield	175,500
Bridgeport	67,954	Poland	119,761
Brisben	31,292	Port Crane	57,906
Castle Creek	49,524	Port Dickinson	3,677
Cayuga	12,370	Richfield Springs	89,280
Cincinnatus	75,042	Sanitaria Springs	72,104
City of Cortland	63,109	Seneca Falls	51,368
City of Cortland	8,190	Smyrna	12,150
Clark Mills	111,064	Springfield	41,094
Clayville	148,500	Stanwix Heights	48,017
Clinton	51,516	Trumansburg	96,912
Dolgeville	37,863	Utica	128,686
Durhamville	42,790	Vernon Center	57,600
East Herkimer	112,500	Village of McGraw	80,511
Enfield	43,249	West Oneonta	72,000
Fayette-Varick	118,423	Whitesboro	69,063
Fleming VFD #2	209,700	TOTAL	4,448,136
Frankfort	62,350		
Frankfort	342,000		
Garrattsville	31,361		
Geneva	84,798		
Genoa	32,445		
Halsey Valley	225,000		
Hartwick	122,815		
Henry Hiteman	56,043		
Horner	50,256		
Killawog	34,740		
Lisle	157,500		
Lodi	10,656		
Maine	38,533		
Middleville	28,665		
Mohawk	69,120		
New Berlin	74,250		
New Hartford	179,019		
Newfield	23,200		

Chairman BOEHLERT. The hearing will come to order.

I want to welcome everyone here to beautiful, downtown Auburn, New York, for this House Science Committee field hearing on federal support for the firefighters and first responders. I greatly appreciate my colleague, Congressman Brad Miller from North Carolina, joining us here. And I want to especially offer my thanks to all of the witnesses who have taken time from their busy schedule to join us.

Today's hearing—can you hear it okay? Today's hearing will follow exactly the same rules and procedures that we follow when the Committee convenes in Washington, DC. And Chief Quill, you know that drill, you've been down there testifying in Washington, and Chief David James from Weedsport, you too have been down.

It is a wonderful chance for citizens to see firsthand the working of their government. It also provides an excellent opportunity for local officials who may have not had the time or opportunity to come to Washington to have their views heard. I am always one who operates under the assumption that not all wisdom is in Washington, DC. I think it's important for Congressional committees to get out across America in the real world, beyond the borders of Washington, DC, to hear from people in the communities like Auburn and counties like Cayuga. You can't always beat a path to Washington, so sometimes I think Congress should come to you, and that's exactly what we're doing.

Today's hearing will focus on an issue that's critical to all of us: ensuring that firefighters and first responders have the resources they need to help protect us from a variety of threats.

There are few matters on which I place a higher priority. That's why I was one of the founding members of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus about 20 years ago and why I'm proud to serve as co-chair today.

I've put in that time because I don't want to make the mistake that so many Americans make, which is taking our first responders for granted. Firefighters, whether paid or volunteer, guard our lives with their lives. They devote themselves to their communities day after day after day, usually outside the limelight. They deserve our help, but when we help firefighters, we're not being altruistic or magnanimous. After all, we're the real beneficiaries. Grants to fire departments make us all safer.

And the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program that we will review today, commonly referred to as the FIRE Act, and the jurisdictions that they protect have benefited greatly from the program over the past three years.

In our Congressional district alone 56 departments received over \$4 million in grants last year. And Chief, let me congratulate you. And Chief McQueen from Whitesboro, let me congratulate you. You've done exceptionally well.

From Utica to Frankfort, to Aurelius and here in Auburn and many of the counties in between, firefighters are getting much needed equipment and training. That is something members of the fire caucus are very proud of.

And let me stress, the fire caucus is not a Republican creation or a Democrat creation, it's a bipartisan creation, and Congressman Miller is a very valuable member.

But many needs are still unmet. The program needs to be continued. And that's why I've introduced H.R. 4107, which we will consider today.

Let me take a brief moment to describe the bill which will allow us to continue to address these most pressing needs. The legislation reauthorizes the Fire Grant Program for three years at its current authorized level of \$900 million per year. It mandates the peer-review process that has been such a critical component of the program's success.

Firefighters and firefighting experts developed the criteria under which the applications are judged, and they make the key decisions as to who gets the positive nod on which projects are funded. It calls on the USFA to administer the program, which is the right agency with a track record of success in working with the fire services. It increases the maximum allowable grant and decreases the matching requirement for larger departments.

And the mayor is going to appreciate that. So often we'll pass programs in Washington and say we'll give you so much money if the local jurisdiction will come up with the additional money, and so often the local jurisdiction is strapped and doesn't have the resources to come up with additional money. So we're decreasing the matching requirements.

The program is needed, and I'm confident that it will be reauthorized before the end of the fiscal year. And that's why we're having this hearing, to develop the testimony that we can share with our colleagues so that they will appreciate how important the volunteer and the paid companies view this program.

With that, let me say I am particularly pleased to welcome to Central New York my friend and colleague from the Committee on Science. And we have jurisdiction over all federal firefighting programs. The distinguished gentleman from North Carolina, Mr. Miller. Mr. Miller.

[The prepared statement of Chairman Boehlert follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN SHERWOOD BOEHLERT

The Committee will come to order. I want to welcome everyone here to beautiful downtown Auburn, New York for this House Science Committee field hearing on federal support for firefighters and first responders. I greatly appreciate my colleague, Congressman Brad Miller from North Carolina, for joining me here and I want especially to offer my thanks to all the witnesses who have taken time from their busy schedules to join us today.

Today's hearing will follow exactly the same rules and procedures that we follow when the Committee convenes in Washington, DC. It is a wonderful chance for citizens to see first hand the workings of their government. It also provides an excellent opportunity for local officials who may not have the time or opportunity to come to Washington to have their views heard.

Today's hearing will focus on an issue that is critical to all of us: ensuring that firefighters and first responders have the resources they need to help protect us from a variety of threats.

There are few matters on which I place a higher priority. That's why I was one of the founding leaders of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus about twenty years ago, and why I'm proud to serve as a Co-chair today.

I've put in all this time because I don't want to make the mistake that so many Americans make, which is taking our first responders for granted. Firefighters, whether paid or volunteer, guard our lives with their lives. They devote themselves to their communities day after day after day—usually outside the limelight. They deserve our help, but when we help firefighters, we're not being altruistic or magnanimous. After all, we're the real beneficiaries. Grants to fire departments make all of us safer.

And the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program that we will review today—commonly referred to as the FIRE Act—has done just that. Fire departments in Central New York and around the country—and the jurisdictions they protect—have benefited greatly from the program over the past three years. In my Congressional District, 56 departments received over \$4 million dollars in grants last year. From Utica to Frankfort to Aurelius to here in Auburn and many of the tiny towns in between, fire departments are getting much needed equipment and training. That is something members of the fire caucus are very proud of.

But many needs are still unmet. The program needs to be continued. And that is why I have introduced with several of my colleagues in Washington the legislation before us today H.R. 4107, which we will consider today.

And let me take a moment to briefly describe the bill, which will allow us to continue to address these most pressing needs. The legislation reauthorizes the fire grant program for three more years, at its current authorized level of \$900 million per year. It mandates the peer-review process that has been such a critical component of the program's success. It calls on USFA to administer the program—the right agency with the track record of success in working with the fire services. It increases the maximum allowable grant size and decreases the matching requirement for larger departments—two issues that were very important to the national fire services organizations with which we worked very closely with to craft this bill, and whom we heard from at a hearing in Washington last month on the bill.

And today I'm excited that we have this opportunity for a follow-up hearing to receive comments from those which the program impacts directly—the end-users.

With that, let me begin to close as we have a limited amount of time and I want to make sure there is plenty left for discussion.

But first, I want to thank all of our witnesses for being here today. And in particular, I would like to thank Chief Mike Quill for his generosity in hosting us here today. I also want to thank Dave Paulison, the U.S. Fire Administrator, for taking time out of his busy schedule to join us here today. For those of you that may not be aware, USFA is a small, but critical agency nestled inside the mammoth Department of Homeland Security. A lot of people in Washington don't know about them, but they have a very important mission: to serve you, the first responder community and the greater public, in reducing the loss of life and property from fires and related hazards.

And I can tell you that Chief Paulison has ably guided the agency in this effort, seeing it through numerous challenges and keeping it focused on its core mission of strengthening the fire services across America while also contributing greatly to the Department's broader efforts to prepare for, and respond to, acts of terrorism.

And as a bit of an aside I should take this opportunity to let Chief Paulison know that he shouldn't plan to rest on these past successes, as Congress will be soon sending him a new challenge in the form of the SAFER Program. I'm pleased to announce that SAFER—legislation of mine that I crafted to complement the FIRE Act by helping us address the critical staffing shortages in our fire services—will hopefully soon be a reality. President Bush signed it into law last year, and just this past week we were able to secure \$50 million in startup funding for the program. It's only a fraction of what is needed, but an important achievement nonetheless, and something we can build on.

With that, I will stop talking, and start listening. First to my colleague Mr. Miller from North Carolina and then to our distinguished panel.

Mr. MILLER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am very pleased to be here at the Auburn Fire Department to join Chairman Boehlert for the Science Committee hearing on issues associated with fire safety and emergency responders.

Mr. Boehlert is certainly one of the leading advocates in Congress for local fire departments, for the Fire Grants, for all that you do. I think that—I wanted to make sure that I said that to the folks back here, back home for Mr. Boehlert, but judging from the presentations here before the hearing began, it appears that you caught up on that on your own without me being here to tell you.

I do appreciate the chance to be here today. Our focus is on the value and effectiveness of the U.S. Fire Administration programs for assisting first responders in performing their critical public safety roles. We are especially interested in reviewing the implementation and impact of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Pro-

gram, which is usually referred to as the Fire Grants Program, as Chairman Boehlert has already said.

And I certainly know from my own district as well how important those Fire Grants have been to so many fire departments, particularly the fire departments in my district as well.

At this point the Fire Administrator Paulison cannot be here personally; I hope that he is able to reach us by telephone and testify by telephone. And I think certainly we will present to him, though, the results of all of the other testimony that we receive today from the people who are on the front line.

The Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 that created the U.S. Fire Administration was intended to address a serious problem affecting the safety of all Americans. We have made much progress during the past quarter century in public education about fire safety and the improvement and effectiveness of fire services and in the wider use of home fire safety devices, but the United States still has one the highest fire death rates among advanced countries.

The question then arises, what is being done that is effective and what ought to be done in order to make further progress in improving the Nation's fire safety record? Of course, the adequacy of the overall level of resources available to the Fire Administration is an important consideration.

The landmark report, *America Burning*, which was the genesis of the 1974 act, requested an initial annual budget for the Fire Administration of \$124 million. That's based upon 1974 dollars.

The report found that those resources were needed to support the training, the technology development, the data collection, and the public education activities that we needed. But the recommended level is not something Congress has ever achieved. We have never provided more than \$40 million for Fire Administration programs.

The Fire Grant Programs, which Chairman Boehlert was so instrumental in developing and in creating, which is what we are discussing primarily in this hearing, is the first federal program that provides substantial direct assistance to fire departments. It is intended to help provide the tools that local departments need to do their job.

Thus far, nearly \$2 billion have been appropriated over four years to support the training programs for fire service personnel and provide resources for the purchase of updated firefighting and emergency response equipment.

The Science Committee recently held a hearing on proposed legislation to reauthorize the Fire Grants through fiscal year 2007 and is currently authorized at a spending level of \$900 million a year. The bill also makes changes to the way the program is currently implemented, including increasing the maximum award size, a reduction to cost share for large fire departments, and support for research grants on ways to improve firefighter safety.

I hope to hear today how the Fire Grants Program is working from those who work most closely with it: folks that we're trying to help out, the people who are putting the money to work to try to protect all Americans from the dangers of fires. I am very interested in our witnesses' views on the impact of that program and the effectiveness on the way it's being implemented by the Fire Ad-

ministration. We welcome any recommendations on how to improve the program.

And more generally I ask for the assistance of the witnesses in assessing how well current fire programs are working and where the available resources are being allocated optimally. I also encourage our witnesses to provide recommendations regarding any aspect of the policies and operations of the Fire Administration as a result in helping the agency to achieve the commission objectives.

Again, I am pleased to be here in Auburn as Chairman Boehlert's guest to review the important programs on the U.S. Fire Administration. I want to thank all the witnesses for making themselves available for this hearing, although I know that you came less far for this hearing for a change than I did. And I want to thank everyone who's assisted the Committee in making arrangements for today's hearing. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Miller follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE BRAD MILLER

I am pleased to be here at the Auburn Fire Department to join Chairman Boehlert for this Science Committee hearing on issues associated with fire safety and emergency response.

Our focus today is on the value and effectiveness of U.S. Fire Administration programs for assisting first responders in performing their critical public safety roles. We are especially interested in reviewing the implementation and impact of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program—which is usually referred to as the Fire Grants program.

I want to welcome Fire Administrator Paulison and our other distinguished witnesses, and thank them for appearing before the Committee.

The *Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974* that created the U.S. Fire Administration was intended to address a serious problem affecting the safety of all Americans. Much progress has been made during the past quarter century in public education about fire safety, improvement in the effectiveness of fire services, and the wider use of home fire safety devices. Nevertheless, the United States still has one of the highest fire death rates among advanced nations.

The question then arises as to what is being done that is effective and what more ought to be done in order to make further progress in improving the Nation's fire safety record. Of course, the adequacy of the overall level of resources available to the Fire Administration is an important consideration.

The landmark report, *America Burning*, which was the genesis of the 1974 Act, recommended an initial annual budget for the Fire Administration of \$124 million, in then-year dollars. The report found that these resources were needed to support training, technology development, data collection, and public education activities. But appropriation levels have never exceeded \$40 million for core Fire Administration programs.

The Fire Grants program, which we will be discussing during this hearing, is the first federal program that provides substantial direct assistance to fire departments. It is intended to help provide the tools fire departments need to do their job. Thus far, nearly \$2 billion has been appropriated over four years to support training programs for fire service personnel and to provide resources for the purchase of up-to-date firefighting and emergency response equipment.

The Science Committee recently held a hearing on proposed legislation to reauthorize the Fire Grants program through fiscal year 2007 at the currently authorized funding level of \$900 million per year. The bill also makes some changes to the way the program is currently implemented, including increases in maximum award size, a reduction in the cost share for large fire departments, and support for research grants on ways to improve firefighter safety.

I hope to hear today how the Fire Grants program is working from some of those it is intended to benefit. I am interested in our witnesses' views on the impact of this program and on the effectiveness of the way it has been implemented by the Fire Administration. Any recommendations on how to improve the program would be welcome.

More generally, I ask the assistance of our witnesses in assessing how well current Fire Administration programs are working and whether the available resources are being allocated optimally.

I also encourage our witnesses to provide recommendations regarding any aspect of the policies and operations of the Fire Administration that will result in helping the agency to achieve its mission objectives.

Again, it is my pleasure to be in Auburn, New York today with Chairman Boehlert to review the important programs of the U.S. Fire Administration. I want to thank our witnesses for making themselves available for this hearing, and I also want to thank everyone here who assisted the Committee in making arrangements for this hearing.

Chairman BOEHLERT. Thank you very much.

Now, as some of you know, earlier today we received notification that U.S. Air had cancelled its mid-morning flight from Washington to Syracuse, therefore denying us a personal appearance on behalf of U.S. Fire Administrator David Paulison.

But this is a Science Committee, so we have to figure out a different way to do it. And we're going to bring to you Administrator Paulison by long distance by telephone. And Mr. Clancy, is it prepared now?

With that, let me present to you, ladies and gentlemen, Mr. R. David Paulison, U.S. Fire Administrator and Director, Preparedness Division, Emergency Preparedness and Response, Department of Homeland Security. Mister Administrator, are you available?

STATEMENT OF MR. R. DAVID PAULISON, U.S. FIRE ADMINISTRATOR AND DIRECTOR, PREPAREDNESS DIVISION, EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE DIRECTORATE/FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY, DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. PAULISON. [Via telephone.] Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee. I appreciate you indulging us by speakerphone, and I apologize for not being able to make it up there; but, unfortunately, I don't have much control over the airlines.

I appreciate you being there, especially the fire officers out there. You need to take interest in what's going on, and by attending meetings like this and telling us what your issues are and how well we're doing, it just makes it tremendously easier for us to make decisions.

Let me cover just a few things; I'll keep it as short as I can. And I know I can't hear you very well, but maybe we can pass questions back and forth where we can focus on what your issues are.

When I took over Fire Administration, we decided to get back to basics and to what exactly were we supposed to be doing in Fire Administration, how best can we help the fire service out there. And we decided we could do it in three ways: (1) by providing leadership for the fire service, (2) by an advocacy program where we can make your issues known in Congress and in the White House, and (3) by helping to coordinate issues out there. And those are the three areas that we're focusing on.

But the Fire Administration and myself, we're going to stay with our basics in fire service training, which is what we do best, a public education and awareness program, our technology research issues, and then also the data analysis that we use for our interest program.

Training issues I think is probably the most important thing because one of our primary missions is to provide first responder training. In the early 1990s and up to the mid 1990s we were happy we were getting 4000 students on campus. And I'm proud to say that last year we had over 17,000 students on campus, and we turned away 30 or 40 percent of those that applied because we just simply didn't have enough room. So we're going to be expanding into our distance learning. And this last year we trained 185,000 students through our distance learning program.

What we're focusing on is training command-level fire officers, emergency managers, emergency responders, and technical staff. And that includes city managers, public works directors, and all of those people that it takes to respond to some of the major disasters.

But we're going to continue to focus on all hazards. I know we have to pick the services and means and what to do with that because at least, as you know very well, we have the very core of this country to protect. But we're going to stay the course and continue on our own on behalf of the commission because although I cannot guarantee a terrorist attack, I can guarantee that we're going to have hurricanes and tornados and floods and earthquakes and all those things we have every day that the fire service has to deal with.

We're learning at some new training programs, primarily one on incident management teams that we're developing around the country. We've already done one in New York—excuse me, one in Washington, DC, one in Pennsylvania, and we're going to be looking to New York to do the next one.

We know when we have these major disasters, and I can speak from personal experience after handling Hurricane Andrew, that after three or four days your command staff starts getting burned out and they start not making good decisions anymore, and you need incident commanders to come in and help to fill those slots in our ICS [Incident Command System] system. So we're putting these tapes together to go in and assist the local fire departments, looking to fill in those slots as your command staff starts getting tired.

We're going to focus more on long distance learning, like I said, and we're going to make sure that we do courses, especially like the integrated emergency management course that we have. And we bring in seven or eight people from the city, the fire chief, police chief, public works director, the city managers, all those people that have to handle those emergencies and teach them as a team on how to deal with those things.

Oklahoma City went through the course just before the Oklahoma City bombing, and they credited taking that course with their ability to handle that incident. Salt Lake City went through this just before the Olympics, and they did the same thing.

Each year, as you all know, we're still losing over 4,000 people a year in fires in this country. It's one of the worst in the industrialized world per capita. Our annual property loss is over \$10 billion to this country, this is through fire, and also on top of that we're losing over 100 firefighters every year. So those are going to be our main focuses as long as I'm here at the Fire Administration.

One of the campaigns we kicked off last year was the Babies and Toddlers campaign. We know that the majority of our fire deaths are children under five and those over 65, so we kicked off the Babies and Toddlers campaign.

And this year we're kicking off a public safety campaign for people over 50. The campaign is primarily focused on those over 65 and those caregivers that are over 50 who give care for those who are over 65. And we're also going to kick off or are kicking off our National Residential Sprinkler Initiative. We think that the next step of protecting lives for people in this country is through the Residential Sprinkler Initiative. We know from experience that Scottsdale, Arizona, has had a sprinkler ordinance for over 15 years. In the 15 years they have never lost a life in Arizona, but they lose one a year in Maryland. So we're going to keep pushing to do that.

I guess the main thing we want to talk about is the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program that we have that has been tremendously successful. In your district alone, Congressman, we have given out almost \$8 million since 2002–2003, and I'm sure there will be much more in the upcoming year.

We're focused on training, safety, fire prevention, fire apparatus, personal protective gear and other equipment, and also with health and wellness. In your districts up there most of the equipment that we purchased has been those basic issues with subject breathing apparatus, personal protective equipment, and other types of equipment. And we're going to continue focusing on those.

As of the end of June 9th of this year we have awarded over 16,000 grants nationwide, and once we finish the support grants we'll have given out almost \$2 billion to the fire service. And never before in the history of the fire service have we as the Federal Government participated in a program like that.

We're going to stick with the current review process, as we know. Secretary Ridge is moving all of the first responder grants into the Office for Domestic Preparedness, and that's going to centralize all of our grants. We'll have a one-stop shop.

And I'm proud to say that our relationship with him has been excellent, and we're going to continue with the peer-review process where we bring over 400 fire people a year in to review those grants and allow the firefighters that are making the decisions of where these grants need to go.

I think those are the main issues I wanted to cover. What I would like to do is answer any questions that you might have with the Fire Grants and anything the Fire Administration is doing. We're going to have to probably relay so I can hear these questions, but let's try it and see if it works.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Paulison follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF R. DAVID PAULISON

Good Morning, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. My name is R. David Paulison. I am the Director of the Preparedness Division and the United States Fire Administrator in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Department of Homeland Security (DHS). I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of Secretary Ridge.

Each year, fire injures and kills more Americans than the combined losses of all other natural disasters. Death rates by fire in the United States are among the highest in the industrialized world. The U.S. Fire Administration's (USFA) mission

to reduce loss of life and property because of fire and related emergencies is a sobering challenge, but also a hopeful challenge, since most of these deaths are preventable.

As a part of DHS, the USFA staff works diligently to prevent these deaths, injuries, and the damage to property through leadership, advocacy, coordination and support in four basic mission areas: fire service training, public education and awareness, technology and research, and data analysis.

To accomplish this mission, USFA works with the fire service, other emergency responders and State and local governments to better prepare them to respond to all hazards, including acts of terrorism. USFA also listens to State and local governments and works with private industry to provide standardized, practical, compatible equipment. USFA assists first responders and emergency managers as they practice and refine their response plans with partners at the local, State, and federal level. USFA will continue to provide training and education programs to prepare for the routine hazards as well as the emergent threats posed by WMD and terrorist incidents.

Today, I will focus my remarks on the U.S. Fire Administration, its programs and services, how to improve the preparedness, effectiveness, and safety of our first responders, and summarize our current activities and future needs. In addition, I will discuss the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program, known as the FIRE Act Grants, that USFA had the privilege of administering from its inception in Fiscal Year (FY) 2001 through FY 2003.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The U.S. Fire Administration is a national leader in fire safety and prevention and in preparing communities to deal with fires and other hazards. USFA is working to support the efforts of local communities to reduce the number of fires and fire deaths, champions federal fire protection issues, and coordinates information about fire programs.

In terms of our preparedness programs, USFA recognizes the importance of training as a vital step toward a first responder community that is prepared to respond to any kind of emergency, ranging from a small fire to a terrorist attack involving a large number of victims. We continue to administer training and education programs for community leaders and first responders to help them prepare for and respond to emergencies regardless of cause or magnitude.

DHS provides equipment, vehicles, and training and wellness programs through the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program to help first responders perform their duties. For FY 2004, Congress again appropriated over \$745 million for DHS to provide grants directly to fire departments to build their basic response capabilities for all types of emergencies, including suppressing fires. This brings total funding for this grant program to a little over \$1 billion since the program began three years ago. This program benefits communities as a whole and benefits other first responder entities by building the base capabilities of local fire departments to respond to all types of incidents.

FEMA continues to provide training in emergency management to our firefighters, law enforcement, emergency managers, health care workers, public works, and State and local officials at our Emergency Management Institute. I would like to give you a few more details about these and other USFA activities.

TRAINING

National Fire Academy and Emergency Management Institute

USFA's primary mission continues to be preparation of this nation's first responders through training at the National Fire Academy (NFA) and Emergency Management Institute (EMI) in Emmitsburg, Maryland and our new addition, the Noble Training Center in Anniston, Alabama, a full scale hospital facility for training medical response personnel.

In the early 1990s, when USFA had 4,000–5,000 students attending courses in the resident programs, the programs were considered a success. In 2003, FEMA trained almost 17,000 resident students at NFA and EMI.

The National Fire Academy and the Emergency Management Institute offer a wide variety of training programs to promote the professional development of command level firefighters, emergency managers, emergency responders, and technical staff. Fire departments will continue to receive training to respond to hazards such as chemical accidents, floods, or hurricanes in addition to training from the Department of Homeland Security to respond to terrorist attacks. USFA will continue to develop policy, procedures and training for a cadre of structural firefighters that will be identified by States in wildland fire threat zones.

In FY 2003, EMI provided critical emergency management training for over 8,000 students, and over 185,000 individuals completed independent study courses. The NFA provided residential training, training through outreach, regional or direct deliveries, and distance learning efforts to over 95,000 students. Both EMI and NFA expect to increase course offerings and number of students trained for FY 2004.

Emergency responders, firefighters, emergency managers and others who have taken courses at EMI and NFA have told USFA that these courses have added value to job performance and professional development. This federal support provides State and local entities increased opportunities for fire service training.

In the future USFA will:

- Coordinate the exchange of training materials and information among State and local fire training systems;
- Focus on distance learning and alternate training delivery methods such as the National Incident Simulation and Training network; independent study programs, and computer-based courses;
- Increase the number of Integrated Emergency Management Courses with bioterrorism scenarios aimed at bringing officials of local jurisdictions together to simulate and critique their responses to terrorism-driven events;
- Revise training courses to include the most updated information on risk management, public fire safety education, and emergency response;
- Partner with associate and bachelor degree programs to align the national academic fire curricula; and,
- Include multiple delivery formats in future course development so that the nexus of the course may be provided to the field in a variety of adaptable formats.

FEMA is currently developing a training program to prepare regional Incident Management Teams (IMT) to provide support for major incidents prior to, or in lieu of, the arrival of a Federal IMT. Simultaneously, FEMA is developing the training for the Federal Incident Management Teams Program.

Noble Training Center (NTC)

Training provided by FEMA at the Noble Training Center (NTC) focuses on hospital preparedness and the integration of hospitals' responses to a WMD incident into the total community response system. Specific courses at NTC include: Healthcare Leadership and Decision-Making, and the Integrated Emergency Management Course (IEMC) for communities, currently part of the Metropolitan Medical Response System program. As resources become available, Hospital Emergency Incident Command (HEICS) train-the-trainer courses will be offered. A hospital emergency planning course will also be developed. All of these actions will contribute support for planning medical surge capabilities.

In addition, FEMA has actively engaged the Department of Health and Human Service's Healthcare Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) staff, specifically the National Bioterrorism Preparedness Program, to train some of their grantee hospital personnel at Noble this year, and also to ensure a coordinated planning and training effort in the future.

The transition of Noble provides challenges that DHS/FEMA are actively engaged in addressing. These challenges include: integration of the Noble Training Center into the FEMA training system, the development of new curricula and delivery of existing curricula for the hospital/health care community, completing the renovation of the hospital classroom for exercise delivery, and completing the renovation of the dormitories. Additionally, FEMA is in the early stages of coordinating some of the training programs and sharing resources with the Center for Domestic Preparedness, also located at Ft. McClellan.

It is critical that DHS keep the most likely first responders to any terrorism or WMD event fully advised of information and circumstances that might affect their response and their community's preparation. Partnering with the law enforcement community has enhanced our ability to deliver direct warnings that will result in improved operations and better outcomes. We look forward to continuing our partnership in critical infrastructure protection.

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

Reducing the loss of life and property caused by fire remains a significant challenge. Each year, fire kills more than 4,000 people and injures more than 22,000. Home safety means smoke alarms, education, and sprinklers. Annual property losses due to fire are estimated at nearly \$10 billion. And, firefighters pay a high

price. In 2003, 109 firefighters died while on duty. These losses are unacceptable because most can be prevented.

USFA continues to deliver fire safety messages to those most vulnerable to fire—the very young, the elderly, and others. We will continue to manage Emergency Response Team activities with an eye toward public outreach and community hazards assessment and mitigation efforts. USFA will assist communities in establishing Community Emergency Response Teams.

Our Fire Safety Campaign for Babies and Toddlers is targeted to parents and caregivers of children under the age of five. This program has garnered over 50 million media impressions since its launch. The fire service and national partners are reaching millions more through pediatricians, SAFE KIDS coalitions, NFPA Champions, and other service providers.

The Multi-cultural Campaign for Babies and Toddlers targets parents and caregivers in African American, Hispanic, and Latino communities. USFA has produced fact sheets in six additional languages to help the fire service reach high-risk groups.

USFA's Quick Response Program identifies "teachable moments" to get fire safety in the news immediately after a fatal or other major fire, by sending fire safety fact sheets to local media and fire department as the story is unfolding. In March 2004 alone, the Quick Response Program responded to 359 residential fires, generated 24 known news stories, and coordinated 11 media interviews.

This summer we are launching a Fire Safety Campaign for People 50-Plus which will be a new public education campaign targeting high risk population aged 65 and older. This campaign will also target the 50-plus age group in order to also reach people who are entering and caring for those in the high-risk senior years.

Progress is being made through the National Residential Sprinkler Initiative. FEMA will continue to broadcast training information via the Emergency Education Network (EENET) twice a month to enhance State and local preparedness for all hazards, including terrorist incidents. Since 1981, EENET has broadcast more than 400 programs to meet the needs of all levels of emergency management, from volunteer firefighters to State Emergency Management Directors.

EENET is an effective way to get timely information or training out to a large audience. Coupled with other outreach and training programs, EENET is a good way to share information about training and education and to keep first responders abreast of emerging issues.

DATA COLLECTION

The Fire Administration continues to collect, analyze, publish, and distribute data and information related to fire prevention, occurrence, control, and related fields. USFA defines and describes the national fire problem, and supports State and local collection and analysis of fire incident data.

ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS GRANT PROGRAM

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant program provides competitive grants to address training, safety, prevention, apparatus, personal protective gear and other firefighting equipment needs as well as wellness and fitness issues of local fire departments. DHS has streamlined the online application process for fire grants and sped up the flow of resources to first responders, while ensuring that the funds are used effectively and appropriately. In 2001, 2002, and 2003, we received over 20,000 applications each year, from fire departments across the country.

As of June 9, 2004, FEMA has processed more than 30,000 grants payments totaling more than \$800 million for the Assistance to Firefighters Grants Program from FY 2001 to FY 2003. The total for the Firefighter Assistance for FY 2001 is \$91,050,915; for FY 2002, 12,107 payments totaling \$326,389,392; and for FY 2003, 12,696 payments totaling \$371,345,489. Also, as of June 9, 2004, Fire Prevention grants awarded for FY 2002 and FY 2003 include 293 payments totaling \$6,226,218.00.

Beginning with the 2001 Grant Program, the Emergency Education NETWORK (EENET) broadcast valuable information on the grant programs and process. Prior to the application period in FY2003, EENET broadcast an actual applicant workshop, which was rebroadcast several times during the application period. FEMA heard from many organizations that this eased the application process. We began announcing the FY 2003 awards to successful applicants in June 2003 and completed them three months ahead of schedule in February of 2004.

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant program in its short three-year existence has provided a tremendous amount of equipment, training and educational programs across the Nation. At present, there has not been an evaluation of this grant program's impact because of the nature in which these projects are undertaken, com-

pleted, and the resulting impact on public safety. In many cases the vehicles purchased are just coming on line, the training provided is just now being internalized, and the public education campaigns are underway.

Lauded by many, the peer review process for the fire grants process has been a tremendous success. The process allows a diverse sample of the national fire services community to review and rank the applications. It allows over 400 fire services members, both career and volunteer, from large and small communities, from rural and suburban areas to play a significant role in making award recommendations. This allows the fire services, who best know the needs of that community, to have a substantive role in the decision making process. The present process of outside groups and individual firefighter involvement significantly enhances the entire grant program.

In an effort to offer "One Stop Shopping" to the applicant of the FIRE Act grants—the local fire department—the Secretary of Homeland Security, with support from the Congress, consolidated all first responder grant award programs within the Office for Domestic Preparedness (ODP). This created a single point of entry for States and localities into the Federal Government seeking first responder assistance. In 2004, ODP, along with USFA assistance and subject matter expertise, managed the fire grants program within DHS. USFA continues to work closely with ODP to ensure the continued success of this vital program. In addition, DHS is contributing to government wide efforts to facilitate the federal grants application process by posting summaries of grant announcements on the Federal Government's Grants.gov website.

As an example of the cooperation between ODP and USFA, for FY 2004 and FY 2005, we have discussed the need to undertake a study to attempt to quantify the program's impact on local fire departments and fire safety. Both USFA and ODP believe such a study is necessary and will yield valuable information as the Department continues its efforts to support the Nation's fire service.

CONCLUSION

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for giving me this opportunity to appear before you today. Your continued support is greatly appreciated. I will be glad to answer any questions you and other Members of the Committee may have.

BIOGRAPHY FOR R. DAVID PAULISON

R. David Paulison was appointed Director of the Preparedness Division of the Emergency Preparedness & Response Directorate/FEMA, in the newly created Department of Homeland Security in 2003. He will continue to serve as the Administrator for the U.S. Fire Administration, a position to which he was appointed in December 2001.

As Director of the Preparedness Division, Mr. Paulison administers a broad range of programs designed to reduce injuries and death due to disasters, strengthen states and communities and prevent or reduce damage to public and personal property. He is also responsible for enhancing State and local emergency preparedness, training federal, State, and local emergency managers, and conducting a nationwide program of exercises. As head of the U.S. Fire Administration, Mr. Paulison also supports State and local fire service programs and oversees programs to reduce life and economic losses due to fire and related emergencies in partnership with fire protection and emergency service communities.

Before joining FEMA, Mr. Paulison, who has 30 years of fire rescue services experience, was Chief of the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department. In that position, he oversaw 1,900 personnel with a \$200 million operating budget and a \$70 million capital budget. He also oversaw the county's emergency management office.

He began his career as a rescue firefighter and rose through the ranks to Rescue Lieutenant, Battalion Commander, District Chief of Operations, Division Chief, Assistant Chief and then Deputy Director for Administration before becoming Chief. His emergency management experience includes Hurricane Andrew and the crash of ValuJet Flight 592.

A native of Miami, Fla., Mr. Paulison earned a Bachelor of Arts from Florida Atlantic University and completed the Program for Senior Executives in State and Local Government at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. He is a recipient of the LeRoy Collins Distinguished Alumni Award and has been inducted into the Miami-Dade Community College Hall of Fame. Mr. Paulison was also selected as Fire Chief of the Year by Florida in 1993 and holds positions in several professional associations. He is a certified paramedic and as Fire Chief, oversaw the Miami-Dade Urban Search and Rescue Task Force. He is also Past President of the International Association of Fire Chiefs.

Chairman BOEHLERT. Mr. Administrator, first of all, I'd like to thank you very much. And quite honestly, we'll defer any questions for you because we get to work with you and see you on a daily basis in Washington, DC.

The main thrust of this hearing is to hear from our locals, people who are actually experiencing this program, and have them tell us what they have learned from their participation.

So let me once again on behalf of Congressman Miller and myself and all the people gathered here thank you for that presentation, and we will share with you and our colleagues in the Congress information that we have gleaned from this hearing so that we can make an outstanding program even better. Thank you.

Just let me point out before we introduce our witnesses that the administrator talked about the millions that we've been successful in securing. Not me, Chief Quill and Chief McQueen and Mr. Perkins and the people in Aurelius, because we have sent out mailings like that which all the fire companies should have received. We have had seminars like we had in Cayuga County Community College and in Whitesboro.

I operate under the assumption that knowledge is power. If you have these federal programs, so often people say, well, how do we get a piece of the action? That's why we have these mailings, that's why we have the seminars, to bring expert information to you so that you can take that information, Chief, as your department so successfully did, and make an application and come up a winner.

I'll tell you, there are a lot of chiefs across the country that look and say how did you do it. And you know how you did it, just as Chief McQueen does, and just as the people out in Aurelius do.

So with that, let me call our witnesses. Mr. Michael Quill, Chief of the Auburn Fire Department; Mr. Brian McQueen, Chief of the Whitesboro Fire Department; Mr. David Perkins, Training Officer for the Aurelius Volunteer Fire Department; and Mr. Pat DiNonno, Director of the Office of Emergency Management, Fire Coordinator for Cayuga County.

We'll go in the order that you were called. Chief Quill, you're up first.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL D. QUILL, CHIEF, AUBURN FIRE DEPARTMENT

Mr. QUILL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Miller, welcome to the city of Auburn, the Auburn Fire Department Station Number 1.

As you know, the city of Auburn is a small city here in Central New York. According to the latest census, Auburn has a population of 28,574 people and covers an area of 8.6 square miles.

In 2003 the city of Auburn responded to 3,752 calls for service including structure fires, vehicle fires, emergency medical calls, hazardous conditions, and service calls. We do this from three stations located throughout the city. Our table of organization calls for 72—excuse me, 71 uniformed members and two civilian employees, with a minimum of 14 firefighters and officers on duty at all times.

Mr. Chairman, in your invitation you asked the witnesses to address certain issues dealing with H.R. 4107 and its affects on the fire service. Let me begin in this manner: The Fire Act as it stands

is probably one of the best things that happens at a fire service. Without it my brother and sister firefighters would not have the proper tools to complete their hazardous jobs.

These grants go directly to the fire departments where needed, not to another layer of bureaucracy where it is whittled down. The grants are awarded on a competitive basis, after careful review by fellow firefighters.

Last year the Auburn Fire Department was fortunate to receive an Assistance to Firefighters Grant for \$180,100. This grant was used to purchase personal protective gear, and if you look to your left, you'll see the equipment that we had purchased: self-contained breathing apparatus and radios. All items necessary for firefighter safety.

The cost of this equipment is approximately \$6,200 per individual. The Fire Grant helped considerably to improve firefighter safety; however, we are certainly not out of the woods yet.

The vehicle sitting behind you was purchased in 2002 with a delivery cost of \$419,000. Currently we are in desperate need of replacing two vehicles with the combined cost of \$1.2 million. One of the hook & ladder trucks that needs to be replaced was built in 1979. In some circles that vehicle would be considered an antique.

One of our front line engines, or as some people call it, a pumper, is 15 years old. Yes, we can continue to repair them, but obtaining replacement parts is practically impossible. There comes a time when you need to purchase new vehicles and actually can save money by doing so. We currently have a grant request in to replace this engine, and hopefully we'll be successful again this year.

Thanks to the Fire Grants, fire departments in Central New York are purchasing the necessary equipment to fit their individual needs. When you talk to chiefs who have been successful in landing a grant, you can hear their pride in the fact that they can now equip their firefighters with the basic equipment that was not affordable before. Slowly, through the Fire Grants, fire departments are reaching a much higher level of readiness.

In regards to federal, state, and local governments, all levels of government need to work together in the area of public safety. The fire service is a prime example of how this can be accomplished. Mutual aid has been in effect for many years.

The events of 9/11 have demonstrated to the public something that the fire service has known for years: in times of emergencies we cannot go it alone. Our firefighters are well trained in what they do, whether it's a paid or volunteer department. We can accomplish our objectives to save lives and protect property, but we need the help of government at all levels to supply us with the tools, equipment, and technology to continue. Local governments cannot afford this alone.

The Federal Government needs to continue the Fire Grants program. This is the best means of equipping fire departments, regardless of size, so they can continue to operate and protect the firefighters. Firefighting is one of the ten most hazardous jobs in the country. We must do all we can to support and protect the Nation's firefighters.

In regards to the Department of Homeland Security of the United States Fire Administration, beginning in March of 2003 a

total of 33 firefighters and fire officers from the Auburn Fire Department have attended classes in Anniston, Alabama, Las Vegas, Nevada, and New Mexico, for a total of 1,700 hours of training.

The Department of Homeland Security sponsored all these classes, and they're all highly regarded by the Auburn Fire Department personnel. One of our employees is also presently working for the Department of Homeland Security as an instructor. In July our city manager and I will be in Anniston to attend classes. I would hope that these types of schools remain open for fire service. When you hear a firefighter say they have their act together, you can rest assured it was not a waste of time.

Michael D. Brown, the undersecretary of Homeland Security for Emergency Preparedness and Response said, "In this post 9/11 environment it is important that all members of the first responder and emergency management community work together to determine risks and coordinate responses."

A consortium of Cayuga County first responders has been formed to address their commitment to ensure up-to-date training to provide along with resources to protect their communities. The mission of the consortium is to provide high quality, engaging training and education for first responders and other public safety personnel to prepare these professionals to react as part of a team to any natural or manmade local emergency.

Locally, Cayuga County Community College is a leader in this consortium and is committed to facilitating the training needed to respond to all hazards. The consortium intends to address the 5P plan: preparedness, performance, psychosocial, practice, and prediction.

Volunteer and career firefighters participated in a Saturday, day-long training workshop at the college this past spring. In addition, the Institute for the Application of Geospatial Technology at Cayuga Community College has developed prototype public safety critical incident management software that John Lamphere has field tested in his criminal justice classes. This high-tech approach to training in field management will be utilized throughout the consortium training workshops. The consortium is developing a full service of first responder training to begin at Cayuga Community College and various locations throughout Cayuga County this coming fall.

I hope the Department of Homeland Security views this type of local and regional cooperation and coordination to be viable and worthy of funding support.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to thank you and the Members of your committee for taking your valuable time to come here and conduct this hearing on this very important issue.

The fire service needs and warrants the Fire Act. This program is definitely a win-win for the fire service as well as the people that we serve and protect. Thank you.

Chairman BOEHLERT. Thank you very much, Chief Quill.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Quill follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHAEL D. QUILL

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, welcome to the City of Auburn, and the Auburn Fire Department Station #1.

The city of Auburn is a small city here in Central New York. According to the latest census, Auburn has a population of 28,574 people and covers an area of 8.6 square miles.

In 2003, the city of Auburn responded to 3,752 calls for service including structure fires, vehicle fires, emergency medical calls, hazardous conditions and service calls. We do this from three stations located throughout the City. Our table of organization calls for 71 uniformed members and two civilian employees, with a minimum of 14 firefighters and officers on duty at all times.

Mr. Chairman, in your invitation, you asked the witnesses to address certain issues dealing with H.R. 4017, and its affects on the fire service. Let me begin in this manner:

- The Fire Act, as it stands, is probably one of the best things to happen to the Fire Service. Without it, my brother and sister firefighters would not have the proper tools to complete their hazardous duties.
- These grants go directly to the fire departments where needed, not to another layer of bureaucracy where it is whittled down.
- The grants are awarded on a competitive basis, after careful review by fellow firefighters.

Last year, the Auburn Fire Department was fortunate to receive an "Assistance to Firefighters Grant" for \$180,100. This grant was used to purchase personal protective gear, self-contained breathing apparatus and radios. All items necessary for firefighter safety. The cost of this equipment is approximately \$6,200.00 per individual. The Fire Grant helped considerably to improve firefighter safety; however, we certainly are not out of the woods yet.

The vehicle sitting behind you was purchased in 2002 with the delivery cost of \$419,000. Currently, we are in desperate need of replacing two vehicles with the combined cost of \$1,200,000. A hook & ladder truck that needs to be replaced was built in 1979. In some circles, that vehicle would be considered an antique. One of our front engines, or as some people call it, a pumper, is 15 years old. Yes, we can continue to repair them, but obtaining replacement parts is practically impossible. There comes a time when you need to purchase new vehicles and actually can save money doing so. We currently have a grant request in to replace this engine and hopefully we will be successful again this year.

Thanks to the Fire Grants, fire departments in Central New York are purchasing the necessary equipment to fit their individual needs. It is a great privilege, when you talk with other Chiefs who have been successful in landing a grant, to hear they can now equip their firefighters with the basic equipment that was not affordable before. Slowly, through the Fire Grants, fire departments are reaching a much higher level of readiness.

FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

All levels of government need to work together in the area of public safety. The fire service is a prime example of how this can be accomplished. Mutual aid has been in effect for many years.

The events of 9/11 have demonstrated to the public something that the fire service has known for years, in times of emergencies we cannot "go it alone." Our firefighters are well trained in what they do, whether it is a paid or volunteer department. We can accomplish our objectives to save lives and protect property; but we need the help of government at all levels to supply us with the tools, equipment and technology to continue. Local governments cannot afford this alone.

The Federal Government needs to continue the Fire Grant program. This is the best means of equipping fire departments, regardless of size, so they can continue to operate and protect their firefighters. Firefighting is one of the ten most hazardous jobs in the country. We must do all we can to support and protect this nation's firefighters.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY, UNITED STATES FIRE ADMINISTRATION

Beginning in March of 2003, a total of 33 firefighters and fire officers have attended classes in Anniston, Alabama, Las Vegas, Nevada and New Mexico for a total of 1700 hrs. of training. The Department of Homeland Security sponsors all these classes, and all are regarded highly by Auburn Fire Department personnel. One of our employees is presently working for DHS as an instructor. In July, our City Manager and I will be in Anniston to attend classes. I would hope these types of schools remain open to the Fire Service. When you hear a firefighter say, "they have their act together," you can rest assured that it was not a waste of time.

Michael D. Brown, Under Secretary of Homeland Security for Emergency Preparedness and Response, said, "In this post 9/11 environment, it is *important that all members of the first responder and emergency management community work together to determine risks and coordinate their responses.*" A consortium of Cayuga County first responders (see attached listing) has been formed to address their commitment to ensure up-to-date training is provided along with resources to protect their communities. The mission of the consortium is to provide high quality, engaging training and education for first responders and other public safety personnel to prepare these professionals to react as part of a team to any natural or manmade local emergency.

Cayuga Community College is a leader in this consortium and is committed to facilitating the training needed to respond to all hazards. The consortium intends to address the "5P" plan: Preparedness, Performance, Psychosocial, Practice and Prediction. (Source: Drew Fried, EMT-B, "Emergency Management and Business Continuity," May/June 2004, *fire/EMS*.)

Volunteer and career firefighters participated in a Saturday, day-long training workshop at the College this past spring. In addition, the Institute for the Application of Geospatial Technology (IAGT) at Cayuga Community College has developed prototype PSCIM (Public Safety Critical Incident Management) software that John Lamphere has field tested in his Criminal Justice classes. This high-tech approach to training and field management will be utilized through the consortium training workshops. The consortium is developing a full-service of first responder training to begin at Cayuga Community College and various locations throughout Cayuga County this coming fall.

I hope the Department of Homeland Security views this type of local and regional cooperation and coordination to be viable and worthy of funding support.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank you and Members of your committee for taking your valuable time to come here to conduct this hearing on this very important issue.

The Fire Service needs and warrants the Fire Act. This program is definitely a "win-win" for the Fire Service as well as the people we serve and protect.

I will be happy to answer any of your questions.

Consortium of First Responders Either in Principle or in Resources

1. Cayuga Community College
2. SUNY Oswego
3. Auburn Police Department
4. Auburn Fire Department
5. Office of the Cayuga County Sheriff
6. Cayuga County Emergency Management Office
7. NASA through the IAGT
8. Federal Emergency Management Agency
9. NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
10. NYS Commission of Corrections
11. NYS Department of Corrections
12. Cayuga County Fire Chiefs Association
13. Cayuga County Firefighters Association
14. City of Auburn Council
15. Cayuga County Legislature
16. Juvenile Fireplay
17. Cayuga County Soil & Water
18. Cornell Cooperative Extension
19. Cayuga County LEPC Advisory Board
20. Cayuga County Emergency Medical Services
21. Department of Treasury

Should be able to get the NYS Police involved through Office of Counterterrorism

*LEPC Advisory Board includes as members:

- Law enforcement
- Fire
- Emergency medical services
- NYS Electric & Gas
- NUCOR
- Salvation Army
- Cayuga County Health Department
- Cayuga County Health and Human Services
- Red Cross
- Numerous others

BIOGRAPHY FOR MICHAEL D. QUILL

My name is Michael D. Quill and I am the Fire Chief of Auburn, NY. I was born and raised in Auburn. After graduating from high school, I entered the United States Marine Corps and served on active duty for four years including a tour in Viet Nam. Upon completion of my enlistment, I started my career with the Auburn Fire Department in November of 1973. During my 30½ years, I have worked in all ranks of the Department from Firefighter to Lieutenant, to Captain, to Municipal Training Officer to Assistant Chief; and in February of 1995, I was promoted to Chief of Department.

I have been married to the former Joan McDonald for thirty years. We have two children. Michael Jr., who is a Police Officer in North Syracuse, NY, and Colleen, who is in the Master's program at State University of New York at Cortland in Elementary Education.



*Focused on being
The Best Small City in New York State*

CITY OF AUBURN

Department of Fire
Michael D. Quill, Chief

June 17, 2004

The Honorable Sherwood Boehlert
Chairman, Science Committee
2320 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Boehlert:

Thank you for the invitation to testify before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Science on June 21, for the hearing entitled "*The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program: A View From Upstate New York*". In accordance with the Rules Governing Testimony, this letter serves as formal notice of the federal funding I currently receive in support of my research.

I received no federal funding directly supporting the subject matter on which I testified, in the current fiscal year or either of the two preceding fiscal years.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael D. Quill".

Michael D. Quill
Fire Chief

MDQ/lps

Chairman BOEHLERT. Chief McQueen.

**STATEMENT OF BRIAN F. McQUEEN, CHIEF, WHITESBORO
FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Mr. McQUEEN. Congressman Boehlert, staff members, Mr. Miller, Chief Quill, Training Officer Perkins, Mr. DiNonno, and guests, today marks the day that the Volunteer Fire Service of New York State has its chance to draw a picture of why Congress needs to continue to fund the life-saving Assistance to Firefighters Grant in years to come.

I'm chief of the Whitesboro Fire Department, a 100 percent volunteer-staffed department, located in Central New York between the cities of Utica and Rome. Our department serves a community of approximately 14,000 residents of all ages and covers about 5,000 square miles of suburban and rural homes.

The department provides fire protection, hazardous materials first response, rescue and extrication, public fire education, along with the advanced and basic life support services. This is provided 365 days a year, seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Within our fire district our department has a proactive mutual aid response plan with our neighboring volunteer departments. Our membership is at 55 members to date; 15 EMTs and 30 qualified interior fire attack certified firefighters. Our department has maintained approximately 55 members for quite some time. The age of the young firefighters knocking our doors down to volunteer are slim and far between.

As I speak with each of you here today, the effects of what happened in New York City on September 11th, 2001 are still impacting small communities like ours. I see this not only as a chief of a volunteer fire department, but as principal of an elementary building located in an area serviced by our department. Society is changing, and the family structure in small villages such as Whitesboro is changing as well. While money from our state is dwindling, the hope of a flourishing grant for fire departments is an answer to a prayer of many of us as volunteer fire service administrators.

The volunteer fire service here in Central New York and around the state needs this grant, H.R. 4107, to survive. This grant is needed so that we can adhere to mandates placed upon us as volunteer fire department administrators, as well as enhancing the safety of not only our firefighters, but our residents as well.

Since its inception I've had the pleasure of making application to the Assistance of Firefighters Grant Program for our department. The first few years I applied for communication and advanced life support equipment that would have enhanced the life safety of our residents and our firefighters, only to be denied both times. That did get me down. Both times I attended the grant writing workshops to see what I could do to make the grant reach a peak of success. The lack of feedback from the USFA's grant department when I asked constructively to critique my previous grant to see how I could make it better was at a minimum. But all of us here today know quite well that this is the kind of support that volunteer firefighters are looking for in the future of this grant program. All of

us don't have the opportunity to hire or have on staff a grant writer. We're once again asked to do more with less.

Success came to Whitesboro this past year as I continued to call Congressman Boehlert's office both in Utica and Washington pleading our case for new self-contained breathing apparatus. With our current ones becoming extinct with age, I was concerned with the life safety of my firefighters and the residents in our coverage area.

Once word was received of the success of the grant, the process was one that should be modeled for other grants across this nation. Personally, I can't say enough about the help and support that I received in dealing with the FEMA grant staff to finalize payments and to carry out the grant. Everything was done in a user-friendly manner and tasks were easy to carry out as a volunteer fire chief.

I must also say that our department was turned down this year once again for the 2003 fire prevention grant. This grant would have allowed our department to work collegially with neighboring departments to provide fire and life safety experiences and education programs for more than 22,000 residents. Once again a rejection letter came with no explanation on why or how to make the proposal better.

The \$69,063 that we received for the Whitesboro Fire Department in the 2003 Assistance to Firefighters Grant provided our firefighters with safer equipment to use in fire and initial attack purposes. Our grant's initial application called for 30 self-contained breathing apparatus, and the program grant was cut to 20. The 20 self-contained breathing apparatus were the state-of-the-art SCOTT NxGs, which are currently being placed into service today as I address you.

These new lighter packs will allow our firefighters to meet the hazards associated with various responses along with providing only 20 of my firefighters with respiratory protection if another attack impedes our society as it did on September 11th. If you could ask if my department's firefighters are fully protected against an attack, I would have to honestly answer no. The other ten SCBAs will have to come from taxpayers and/or fire department fund drive donations.

In this year's grant to be submitted, it is our hope that we will be able to once again flourish in a successful grant. This year's grant will enhance the outreach abilities of our fire department to meet the needs of our community if an attack happens in our area.

The United States Fire Administration must continue to develop outreach financial assistance to volunteer departments in all towns and villages across our state. The financial support can mean a difference between life and death.

Our fire station is the evacuation site in case of an emergency in our districts. Our fire station was built in 1969, is not handicap accessible, has no backup generator or power source if power goes down because of an attack. This year's grant that I applied for has this included, but as of yet, no results. I also operate with an inoperable thermal imaging camera that is eight years old. This tool has been used to enhance firefighter safety while providing us with an ability to rescue a victim if the need arises.

Before I close, I would like to address the changes that are being proposed for this year. First, protection of volunteers from discrimi-

nation. The fire department receiving funds provided under this section shall not discriminate against, or prohibit its members from engaging in, volunteer activities in another jurisdiction during off-duty hours.

This piece is crucial to the problems that we in the volunteer fire service face in the recruitment and retention of volunteers across our communities. These firefighters can enhance the fire protection and education in the volunteer fire departments while providing its residents with a well-trained volunteer staff ready to meet the challenges that we face. As a volunteer fire chief I would look forward to this becoming a reality, as I know this would improve our ranks in numbers, knowledge, and abilities.

Second, our department averages approximately 71 percent of its calls as medical related. Section 3, Item 4 expands upon eligible use of grant funds to include emergency medical services provided by volunteer EMS squads that are not affiliated with a fire department, hospital, or any not-for-profit entity. Organizations such as these are also faced with declining personnel and funding received from its communities.

The addition of this section to the grant will benefit not only these organizations, but also the fire departments and the residents in the area that they respond to. All too often we hear repeated calls for help with these volunteer ambulance corps in our county and surrounding counties. The cost of EMS equipment is on the rise, and the burden of that rise is the pricing impacts that we are impacted with every day.

Inclusion of the Fire Prevention grant is a step in a positive direction when we speak of fire and life safety education. Children under the age of 14 are at the highest risk of receiving needless injuries. And you know as well as I do, these children will someday be sitting here like you and I are today if they have a chance to become better educated in the areas of fire and life safety.

Coalitions across our nation are coming together in hopes of reducing injuries for these children. Injuries from such things as fire, bicycle, water, improper car seat installation, and much more. Communities such as ours are changing in stature. There are more single-parent families moving in, and the need for a parent to work to survive the rising cost of living expenses is at an all-time high.

The job of an educator and public fire educator as well as a firefighter has become more evident as we instruct these latchkey children on how to survive injuries and death. Adding more financial assistance to the Fire Prevention Grant is needed.

With limited funds being forwarded to the volunteer fire departments and municipalities across the state, we can save the local taxes. The need to address the safety in these types of societies is at utmost importance. You may not believe this, but America is still burning in villages, towns, and cities across our state, and our children and senior citizens are being injured every day because we don't have the manpower or equipment to meet the educational needs today.

In closing, opportunities such as the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program is sometimes our only chance to live our dreams to the fullest in the job that we love to do for free. This grant allows us to perform duties that no one would ever think of. After all,

we're the ones going into the fully charged building when everyone is running out. And if you don't believe me, just look at the pictures from the World Trade Center; screaming people running out while brave firefighters were running in. Some of these firefighters came from volunteer departments in the New York City and Long Island area. If it works for them, it can work for us.

All of us, career or volunteer, are not free from the dangers that face us in the fire service. None of us are free from foreign attacks that can happen in any community across this region. I beg you, on the part of the volunteers of New York State and our aging communities, please enhance the Assistance to Firefighters Grant so that all of us can get a chance to continue to share in the financial support that will allow us to do our jobs to the best of our ability. I firmly believe that man made this grant to come to fruition, and man will see that it will continue to grow in each and every area.

I want to thank Congress and especially Congressman Sherwood Boehlert, who has continually fought for the volunteers of our county and Central New York to make sure that they have what other departments around the Nation have. Congressman Boehlert is an advocate for the volunteer fire service and knows the importance of protecting lives, homes, and businesses, as a positive way of serving a society that is constantly changing. Thank you, Congressman, and thank each and every one of you here today for listening and being here.

Chairman BOEHLERT. Thank you very much, Chief. And I want you to know that it's not just me and it's not just a bunch of Republicans, it's Brad Miller, the Democrat from North Carolina, that Congress is awake and well aware of the importance of the work you do every single day. And your testimony demonstrates the high degree of professionalism that's evident in the volunteer companies just as it's evident in the paid companies. You've got a bunch of professionals, some paid, others volunteer, but they're all professional, and we're trying to help you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. McQueen follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BRIAN F. MCQUEEN

Congressman Boehlert, Members of the Committee on Science, U.S. House of Representatives, Mr. Paulison, Chief Quill, Training Officer Perkins, and guests, today marks the day that the volunteer fire service of New York State has its chance to draw a picture of why Congress needs to continue to fund the lifesaving Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program in years to come.

I'm Chief of the Whitesboro Fire Department, a 100 percent volunteer staffed department, located in Central New York between the cities of Utica and Rome. Our department serves a community of approximately 14,000 residents and covers about 5,000 square miles of suburban and rural homes. The department provides fire protection, hazardous materials first response, rescue and extrication, along with advanced and basic life support service. This is provided 365 days a year, seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. Within our fire district our department has a proactive mutual aid response plan with our neighboring volunteer departments. Our membership is at 55 members to date, 15 EMTs and 30 qualified interior fire attack certified firefighters. Our department has maintained approximately 55 members for quite some time. The age of the young firefighters knocking our doors down to volunteer are slim and far between.

As I speak with each of you here today, the effects of what happened in New York City on September 11, 2001 are still impacting small communities like ours. I see this not only as a Chief of a volunteer fire department, but as a principal of an elementary building located in the area serviced by our department. Society is changing and the family structure in small villages such as Whitesboro is changing as well. While money from our state is dwindling ever so low, the hope of a flourishing

grant for fire departments is an answer to a prayer for many of us. The volunteer fire service here in Central New York and around the state needs this grant to survive. This grant is needed so that we can adhere to the mandates placed upon us as volunteer fire department administrators as well as enhancing the safety of not only our firefighters but our residents as well.

Since its inception, I have had the pleasure of making application to the Assistance of Firefighters Grant program for our department. The first two years I had applied for communication and advanced life support equipment that would have enhanced the life safety of our residents and our firefighters, only to be denied both times. Both times I attended the grant writing workshops to see what I could do to make the grant reach a peak of success. What bothered me the most was the lack of feedback from FEMA's grant department when asked to constructively critique my previous grant to see how I could make it better. Their answer to this idea was this could not be done. But, all of us here today, know quite well that this is the kind of support that volunteer firefighters are looking for in the future of this grant program. All of us don't have the opportunity to hire, or have on staff, a grant writer. We're once again asked to do more with less.

Success came to Whitesboro last year as I continued to call the Congressman's office both in Utica and Washington, pleading our case for new self-contained breathing apparatus. With our current ones becoming extinct with age, I was concerned with the life safety of my firefighters and the residents from our coverage area. Once word was received of the success of the grant, the process was one that should be modeled for other grants across this nation. Personally, I can't say enough about the help and support that I received in dealing with the FEMA grant staff to finalize the payments. Everything was done in a user-friendly manner and tasks were easy to carry out as a volunteer Chief.

I must also say that our department was turned down this year for the 2003 Fire Prevention Grant. This grant would have allowed our department to work collegially with a neighboring department to provide fire and life safety experiences and educational programs for more than 22,000 residents. Once again, a rejection letter came with no explanation on why, or how to make the proposal better.

The 2003 Assistance to Firefighters Grant that we received allows us to provide our firefighters with safer equipment to use in fire and initial attack purposes. Our grant's initial application called for 30 self-contained breathing apparatus and the grant program cut us to 20. The grant committee chose this number without sufficient feedback from our department. The 20 self-contained breathing apparatus were the state-of-the-art SCOTT NxG's which are currently being placed into service as I address you here today. These new lighter packs will allow our firefighters to meet the hazards associated with our various responses along with providing only 20 of my firefighters with respiratory protection if another attack impedes our society as it did on September 11. If you could say that my department's firefighters are fully protected against an attack, I would have to say no. The other 10 SCBA's will have to come from the taxpayers and fire department donations.

In this year's grant that we submitted, it is our hope that we will be able to once again flourish in a successful grant. This year's grant will enhance the out-reach abilities of our department to meet the needs of our community if an attack happens in our area.

The Department of Homeland Security should continue to develop out-reach financial assistance to volunteer fire departments in all towns and villages across our state. This financial support can mean the difference between life and death.

Before I close I would like to address to changes that are being proposed for this year. First: "Protection of volunteers from discrimination—A fire department receiving funds provided under this section shall not discriminate against, or prohibit its members from engaging in, volunteer activities in another jurisdiction during off-duty hours." This piece is crucial to the problems that volunteer fire departments face in the recruitment and retention of the volunteers who serve their communities. These firefighters can enhance the fire protection and education in the volunteer fire departments while providing its resident with a well-trained volunteer staff ready to meet the challenges that we face each and every day. As a volunteer fire chief I would look forward to this becoming a reality, as I know this would improve our ranks in numbers, knowledge and abilities.

Second, our department averages approximately 71 percent of its calls as being medical related. Section 3, Item 4 expands upon eligible use of grant funds to include emergency medical services provided by "volunteer EMS squads that are not affiliated with a fire department, hospital, or any for-profit entity." Organizations such as these are also faced with declining personnel and funding received from its communities. The additions of this section to the grant program would benefit not only these organizations, but also the fire departments and the residents in the area

of their response district. All too often we hear the repeated calls for help with our volunteer ambulance corps in our county and surrounding counties. The cost of EMS equipment is on the rise and burden of that rise in pricing impacts the quality of life that you and I can live.

Inclusion of the Fire Prevention grant is a step in a positive direction when we speak of fire and life safety education. In the United States, children under the age of 14 are the highest risk of serious injuries in the United States. You know as well as I do, these children will someday be sitting here like you and I are today if they have a chance to become better educated in the area of fire and life safety. Coalitions across our nations are coming together in hopes of reducing injuries to these children. Injuries from such things as fire, bicycle, water, improper car seat installations and more. Communities such as ours are changing in stature. There are more single parent families moving in and the need for a parent to work to survive the rising cost of living expenses is at an all-time high. The job of an educator and public fire educator has become more evident as we instruct these latch-key children how to survive from injuries and death. Adding more financial assistance to the Fire Prevention Grant is needed.

In closing, opportunities such as the Assistance to Firefighter's Grant Program is sometimes our only chance to live our dreams to fullest in the job that we love and do for free. This grant allows us to perform duties that no one would ever think of. After all, we're the ones going into the fully charge building when everyone is running out. And, if you don't believe me, just look at the pictures of the World Trade Center, screaming people running out, while brave firefighters were running in. Some of these firefighters came from volunteer departments in the New York City/Long Island area. If it works for them, it can work for us.

I want to thank Congress and especially our Congressman Sherwood Boehlert who has continually fought for the volunteers of our county and Central New York to make sure that they have what other departments have around the Nation. Congressman Boehlert is an advocate for the volunteer fire service and knows the importance of protecting lives, homes and businesses as a positive way of serving in a society that is constantly changing. Thank you Congressman and thank each of you here today for listening.

BIOGRAPHY FOR BRIAN F. MCQUEEN

Education

Daemen College, Amherst, NY

B.S. Elementary Education

- Member of Phi Beta Gamma Fraternity
- Assisted with scheduling of athletic events
- Resident Assistant
- Eucharistic Minister

1982–1997 State University at Cortland

Certificate of Advanced Studies

- Administrative requirements were completed with 30 hours
- Currently hold a New York State Certification in School Administration and Supervision
- Certificate of Advanced Study

Professional experience

1998–Present Whitesboro Central School, Whitesboro, New York

Principal—Westmoreland Road Elementary School

- Supervise fifty instructional and ten non-instructional personnel
- Chaired the school's Shared Decision-making Team
- Implemented a successful parent volunteer program
- Wrote a project grant through the Disney Foundation that would provide after school educational and social assistance and intramurals for students
- Implemented a modified Character Education Program
- Designed a building specific Morning Program for students and parents
- Member of the school's Child Study Team

- Improved the New York State English Language Arts Assessment and Grade 5 Writing scores for the building as the school received a 100 percent score on the Grade 4 NYS ELA test in 2002
- Developed evening programs for parents that focus on student/parent success in school
- Developed a Safety Guidebook for teachers in all four elementary schools across the district
- Served on the district's Technology Committee for Web development
- Developed building specific goals that focused on achievement, technology and the achievement of our district's curriculum goals
- Attended Administrative conference at Minnowbrook and the Educational Law Conference in association with Syracuse University.
- Chaired the district's K–12 Social Studies Committee.
- Attended numerous BOCES and district sponsored courses
- Member of the District's safety Committee

2001–Present Fire Chief—Whitesboro Fire Department

- Currently in Charge of Public and Life Safety Education for the fire district
- Position held for three years
- Held each office from Lieutenant through Assistant Chief, Assistant Chief for 11 years.
- Firefighter of the Year—1992
- National Volunteer Fire Council Fire Prevention Award for Excellence in Public and Life Safety Education—1993
- Worked with Assistant Chief Brooks of the Utica Fire Department to enhance training in our department
- Worked as Assistant Chief of Training
- Sat on the committee to develop the new Whitestown Training Site
- Obtained approximately \$400,000 in grants for the fire service in Whitesboro and our county.
- Obtained the following firefighter courses from the Office of Fire Prevention and Control and the National Fire Academy:
 1. Essentials of Firemanship
 2. Initial Fire Attack
 3. Fire Behavior and Arson Awareness
 4. Emergency Vehicle Operators
 5. Hazardous Materials—level 1 and 2
 6. Command and Management for the Company Officer
 7. Vehicle Extrication–2
 8. Public Fire Educators Conference—10 years (Seminar speaker at two of these conferences)
 9. NYS Pump Operators
 10. Incident Command—Taught this in the four sections of our county with Past Chief David Jacobowitz
 11. Instructional Techniques for the Company officer
 12. Certified Interior Firefighter

Central New York Firemen's Association Inc.

- Past Chairperson—Fire Prevention Committee
- Current member of the Scholarship Committee
- New Chairperson of the Legislative Committee

Firemen's Association of the State of New York

- Chaired Fire Prevention and Life Safety Committee from 1992–2002
- Co-Chairperson—FASNY Scholarship Committee
- Coordinated all of the state's fire and life safety education programs for the volunteer fire service of New York State while Chairperson of the FASNY Fire and Life Safety Committee until 2002

- Instituted a statewide fire prevention calendar using our K–5 classrooms across the state.
- Serve as Chairman of Secretary of State Alexander Treadwell’s Task Force of the Development of a New Teacher Course on instructing Fire and Life Safety in the Schools.
- Wrote two grants to the National Fire Protection Agency for the implementation of their Risk Watch Curriculum across New York State.
- Presented at the National Fire Protection Agency’s Risk Watch Coalition Training in Boston, MA.
- Presented for the Whitesboro Central School Teacher Center a 90 minute course in the area of Risk Watch implementation.
- Coordinated a committee to design a Fire Safety brochure for Senior Citizens.
- Speaker at this year’s “Stop the Fire Before it Starts” workshops held across the state.
- Assisted with the training of future Risk Watch communities across the state.
- Guest speaker at the National Fire Protection Agencies Risk Watch Coalition Training in Boston, MA in 2002.
- Wrote a 2004 FEMA grant for Calendar, Essay Contest and the statewide Risk Watch Program. This grant process has received tentative approval for approximately \$100,000. This will enhance the three programs and help to reduce injuries in children ages 14 and younger.

Professional memberships

National Association of Elementary School Principals
 School Administrators Association of New York
 Firemen’s Association of the State of New York
 National Fire Protection Agency
 New York State Association of Fire Chiefs
 Central New York Firemen’s Association
 Oneida County Fire Advisory Board
 Past President of the Oneida County Volunteer Firemen’s Association
 National Fire Protection Agency
 National Volunteer Fire Council

Community activities

St. Anne’s Church, Whitesboro, New York—Member
 St. Paul’s Church—Member
 Fire Chief—Whitesboro Fire Department
 President—Whitesboro CS Baseball Boosters
 YMCA Steering Committee Member for Whitestown
 New Coordinator for the Oneida County Fire and Life Safety Expo for Children—2005

Extracurricular activities

Chairman—New York State Alexander Treadwell’s Task Force for the Development of a College Credit Course in Public Life Safety Education—This course was accepted by the New York State Education Department of Higher Learning and is being pilot tested this Spring semester
 Chairman—Firemen’s Association of the State of New York’s Fire Prevention Education Committee
 Public Speaker/Presenter on Fire and Life Safety Education
 Chairman—New York State Team Risk Watch Committee

Awards Won:

1992 National Volunteer Fire Council’s Excellence in Fire Prevention
 Firefighter of the Year: Whitesboro Fire Department
 Distinguished Community Citizen Award: Whitestown American Legion Post 1113
 2003—Distinguished Alumni Award—Daemen College
 2004—Knight’s of Columbus Humanitarian Award

Hobbies

Public Fire Education
Syracuse University sports
Golf
Family activities—Following my son in sports
Spending time with family and friends

June 17, 2004

The Honorable Sherwood Boehlert
Chairman, Science Committee
2320 Rayburn office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Boehlert:

Thank you for the invitation to testify before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Science on June 21st for the hearing entitled The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program: A View from Upstate New York. In accordance with the Rules Governing Testimony, this letter serves as formal notice of the federal funding I currently receive in support of my research.

Grant Number: EMW-2003-FG-04061
Amount: Federal Share: \$69,063
Local Share: \$7,673
Total Grant Award: \$76,736

Current Year Grant Number: EMW-2004-FG-01039 (No Funding as of Yet)

Sincerely,


Brian F. McQueen
Fire Chief – Whitesboro Fire department

Chairman BOEHLERT. Now we'll hear from the training officer for the Aurelius Fire Department, Mr. David Perkins.

**STATEMENT OF DAVID T. PERKINS, TRAINING OFFICER,
AURELIUS VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Mr. PERKINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Miller, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and provide testimony on this very important issue. My name is David Perkins. I'm a member of the Aurelius Volunteer Fire Department. We're located in Upstate New York just west of the city of Auburn. Our fire department functions with approximately 60 members; 30 of our members provide active service. The fire department operates out of two stations providing fire, rescue, and first response service to the residents of our community.

In addition, we provide a number of specialized services to neighboring towns under mutual aid agreements. In 2003 the fire department responded to 289 alarms consisting of 86 fire-related incidents and 203 EMS-related incidents.

In fiscal year 2003 the Aurelius Fire Department was fortunate to be awarded \$119,804 in round 17 in the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program, otherwise known as the Fire Act, which the Aurelius Fire Department has benefited greatly from receiving this grant in several ways.

A few examples of this are that we were able to upgrade our breathing apparatus to current NFPA standards. Possibly the largest benefit we realized is the ability to now have our members using state-of-the-art breathing apparatus that are, among other things, lighter in weight than our previous units, therefore reducing firefighter stress.

In addition, the new breathing units allow for interoperability with some fire departments, therefore streamlining operations at emergency incidents. And the most important benefit of the breathing apparatus, however, is that it provides for a safer working environment for our members, therefore reducing the potential for injury and death.

As a result of the grant we were also able to upgrade our communications equipment, specifically the equipment that is used during tactical situations during emergency incidents. With the addition of this equipment, every member that steps off a piece of apparatus can do so with a radio. This then allows for additional accountability of members in that members may stay in constant contact with the incident commander. The incident commander may more easily notify personnel of tactical decisions, and more importantly, relay critical messages to all to firefighters at a given incident.

With the funds provided by the grant, we were also able to purchase additional equipment to supplement our existing equipment. This minimizes voids in inventory when units are providing assistance to other departments.

One of the items we were able to duplicate in our inventory is a thermal imaging camera. The thermal imaging camera, or TIC, as it is most commonly known, is a vital part of both normal operations at structure fires as well as during the rapid intervention operations. During out-of-district rapid intervention operations it left the Aurelius Fire District void of this valuable life-saving technology. Fortunately, we were able to purchase a backup camera with grant funds to best ensure this technology is available to the residents of the Aurelius Fire District.

As with most small communities, specifically in Upstate New York, the Aurelius Fire District continually struggles with budget constraints in an effort to keep taxes as low as possible for our residents. The members of the volunteer fire departments continuously endure the long hours of meeting training requirements, answering alarms, and participating in fundraisers in an attempt to offset budget shortfalls.

This is becoming increasingly difficult in the last several years due in part to the reduction in the number of people that are able to dedicate their time to the volunteer fire service. The increase in the number of dual income families, members of the family that have to perform two jobs, and increased personal responsibilities have all contributed to this reduction. In addition to this, call volumes continue to increase, as well as training requirements, there-

fore reducing the amount of time able to be spent on fundraising to help supplement budgets.

Had it not been for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program, I am confident in saying that the members of the Aurelius Fire Department would not have been able to see the benefit of this new equipment technology for another five to seven years, if at all.

The Upstate region of New York, specifically Cayuga County, have been very fortunate to have several departments awarded grants. I believe that any department that applied for this grant is much better off from an operational and a preparedness standpoint, whether it did or did not receive a grant. One benefit of the application process that may not be realized is the necessity for an organization that is going to apply for a grant to review its internal resources and perform some long-term planning, as well as review the resources of neighboring departments.

Departments were forced to determine how the addition of the equipment would affect their day-to-day operations, as well as how the equipment would benefit and affect other departments. This determination had to be made from an interoperability standpoint, as well as an operational effectiveness standpoint. Additionally, how the equipment fits into local and state planning operating procedures.

Sharing of this information and resources among fire departments became commonplace. With that said, however, departments that were not awarded grants still have very real needs for equipment that need to be addressed.

I am very confident that there are departments in Cayuga County, including mine, and other parts of the country that are still using equipment that is several years past its usefulness, does not meet current NFPA and OSHA requirements, and is potentially hazardous to the members using it. This in many cases is no fault of the fire department, but a realization of the lack of financial resources to purchase compliant equipment.

I'm sure there isn't a fire chief out there that doesn't want to have the best possible equipment that he or she can get for his firefighters, but there may not be a means for him or her to achieve this.

After the attacks of September 11th, 2001, the mission of the American Fire Service did not change. We were still sworn to protect life and property. Our mission or scope, however, has broadened. This broadening has also added to the financial burden that fire departments face. The increased and very important new scope now includes the necessity to be prepared for weapons of mass destruction incidents, hazardous materials incidents, collapse rescue, confined space rescue, and several more areas.

While fire departments can't be proficient in every one of these areas, at least the basic understanding and preparation is necessary. The basic level to the highest level means some additional financial burden to the fire department. The State and Federal governments have done very well in helping to offset the costs as much as possible, but there are still associated expenditures to this.

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program is very positive and one of the most beneficial steps the Federal Government is

taking in assisting emergency responders in America in recent years. In order for this to continue to benefit emergency responders, the program needs to continue to be funded so that more and more departments can benefit from having the safest equipment available.

The Federal Government should not bear the entire burden of funding first responders. State and local officials must continue to look for ways to fund emergency services at a level that first and foremost is safe for responders and is of the highest quality and most technically advanced for those we serve.

Unfortunately, funding equipment purchases is only one problem facing America's fire service today. An equally important problem is having staffing, staffing to an adequate level at incidents that safely and effectively ensures a positive outcome is paramount. Staffing issues continue to plague both the career and volunteer fire services.

Fire departments working in conjunction with local and State and Federal Government need to be continuously looking for ways to fund additional career firefighters as well as initiatives to not only encourage people to volunteer, but ways to retain people currently volunteering.

There needs to be incentives for those who choose to volunteer, whether it is tax relief, discounted or free tuition at state colleges, low-interest mortgages, retirement, or health benefits. Whatever it may be, something drastic needs to be done before manpower and membership levels drop any lower. In order for these initiatives, this initiative or any initiative of this type to happen, cooperation between all levels of government will be necessary in order to share in the potential financial burden.

Without these initiatives and creativity in the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters, all the high-tech and safest equipment in the world can't be of benefit if there's nobody to use it.

Every year in the United States approximately 100 members of the fire service lose their lives in the line of duty. But what is most dramatic about this is that since—in the 1970s and 1980s the number of structure fires annually has decreased. Another very disturbing portion of this, of the 100 deaths as a result—a large portion of the 100 deaths is as a result of heart attacks.

The U.S. Fire Administration has done an excellent job and needs to research and promote the health and safety of firefighters, specifically through the continued training of members in building construction, the effects of buildings on fire, self rescue, and Get Out Alive Programs. Something needs to be done to continue to reduce the number of heart attack-related deaths through screening and fitness directives.

I cannot think of a more important program than ensuring the welfare of our emergency responders. The information gained from the Health and Safety Technical Reports to the Everyone Goes Home: Life and Safety Summit, is information that is detrimental—or excuse me, is beneficial to the American Fire Services and needs to continue. The U.S. Fire Administration needs to continue to provide technical reports on ways to reduce firefighter

death and injuries in an effort to continuously educate fire departments of a hazard before it's too late.

The U.S. Fire Administration is an invaluable resource of information, the sharing of information and training. The U.S. Fire Administration web site is a valuable resource of information through its Trade Net site, reports and publications, as well as hundreds of training opportunities, whether in the field, online, or at the National Fire Academy.

Although I have never taken the opportunity to attend the training at the National Fire Academy, I've been told that the facilities and instructors and curriculum are second to none. As we constantly remind ourselves, training is the backbone of emergency services, and failing to train is training to fail.

In conclusion, there are several challenges facing the Fire Service today. Many local governments are struggling to maintain the level of service they provide today from a financial and a personnel standpoint. With that said, some of these very important programs are health—health and fitness cannot be implemented due to lack of funds or resources. Without help at the State or Federal Government, these additional programs cannot become a reality. Additionally, the Federal Government needs to continue to fund programs like the Fire Act to help municipalities meet some of their basic needs.

Chairman BOEHLERT. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Perkins follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DAVID T. PERKINS

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and provide testimony on this very important issue. My name is David T. Perkins and I am a member of the Aurelius Volunteer Fire Department. The Aurelius Fire Department is located in central Cayuga County and is a suburb on the west side of the City of Auburn, New York. The Fire Department was established in 1945 and is governed by the Aurelius Fire District, which consists of a board of five Fire Commissioners. The Fire Department protects approximately 30.2 square miles with a population of approximately 3200 permanent residents. Due to the number of commercial establishments within the town, the population triples and even quadruples during business hours. The Fire Department functions with approximately sixty members. Thirty of our members provide active service. The Department operates out of two Stations providing Fire, Rescue and First Response EMS Service to the residents of our community. In addition, we provide a number of specialized services to neighboring towns under mutual aid agreements. In 2003 the Fire Department responded to 289 alarms consisting of 86 fire related incidents and 203 EMS related incidents. Our members spent 6542.82 hours this year involved in Fire Department related functions with 3192.98 hours spent answering alarms, 2234.95 hours spent training and 1114.89 hours spent conducting other Fire Department operations.

In fiscal year 2003 the Aurelius Fire Department was fortunate to be awarded \$119,804.00 in round seventeen of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (Fire Act). The Aurelius Fire Department has benefited greatly from receiving this grant in several ways. We were able to upgrade our breathing apparatus to current NFPA standards. Possibly the largest benefit we realized is the ability to now have our members using state of the art breathing apparatus that are, among other things, lighter in weight than our previous units, therefore reducing firefighter stress. In addition, the new breathing apparatus allows for inter-operability with some neighboring departments, therefore streamlining operations at emergency incidents. The most important benefit of the breathing apparatus, however, is that it provides for a safer working environment for our members by reducing the potential for injury or death.

As a result of the grant we were also able to upgrade our communications equipment, specifically the equipment that is used in tactical situations during emergency incidents. With the addition of this equipment, every member that steps off a piece

of apparatus can do so with a radio. This then allows for additional accountability of members, in that members may stay in constant contact with the incident commander. The incident commander can more easily notify personnel of tactical decisions and more importantly relay critical messages to all firefighters at a given incident.

Our department performs several functions for neighboring departments that many times take us out of our district. One of these services is known as a Rapid Intervention Team or RIT Team. The sole function of this rescue team is to stand by at the scene of structure fires with specialized equipment to ensure that firefighters operating in hazardous environments will have assistance in being rescued should they become trapped, lost or incapacitated in some way. When functions such as RIT Team operations were preformed out of district it would leave a void in our equipment inventory and reduce our capabilities in our primary jurisdiction. With the funds provided by the grant, we were able to purchase additional equipment to supplement our existing equipment. This minimizes voids in inventory when units were providing assistance to other departments. One of the items we were able to duplicate in our inventory is a Thermal Imaging Camera. The Thermal Imaging Camera, or TIC as it is most commonly known, is a vital part to both normal operations at structure fires as well as during RIT operations. During out of district RIT operations it left the Aurelius Fire District void of this valuable life saving technology. Fortunately, we were able to purchase a back up camera with grant funds to best insure this technology is available to the residents of the Aurelius Fire District.

As with most small communities, specifically in upstate New York, the Aurelius Fire District and Fire Department continually struggle with budget constraints in an effort to keep taxes as low as possible for our residents. The members of volunteer departments continuously endure the long hours of meeting training requirements, answering alarms, and participating in funds raisers in an attempt to offset budget short falls. This has become increasingly difficult in the last several years, due in part to the reduction in the number of people able to dedicate the time to the Volunteer Fire Service. The increase in the number of dual income families, members of the family that have to work two jobs and increased personal responsibilities have all contributed to this reduction. In addition to this, call volumes continue to increase as well as training requirements, therefore reducing the amount of time able to be spent raising funds to supplement budgets. Had it not been for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program, I am very confident in saying that the members of the Aurelius Fire Department would not have been able to see the benefit of this new equipment technology for five to seven years if at all.

The upstate New York region and specifically Cayuga County have been very fortunate to have several Departments awarded grants. I believe that any Department that applied for the grant is much better off from an operational and preparedness standpoint whether or not it received the grant. One benefit of the application process that may not be realized is the necessity for an organization that is going to apply for a grant, to review its internal resources and perform some long-term planning, as well as review the resources of neighboring Departments. Departments were forced to determine how the addition of the equipment would affect their day to day operations as well as how the equipment would benefit and affect other departments. This determination had to be made from an inter-operability standpoint as well as an operational effectiveness standpoint. Additionally, how the equipment fits into local and State planning and operating procedures. Sharing of information and resources among Fire Departments became commonplace. With that said, however, Departments that were not awarded grants still have very real needs for equipment that have to be addressed. I am very confident that there are Departments in Cayuga County, including mine, and other parts of the country that are using equipment that is several years past its usefulness, does not meet current NFPA and OSHA requirements and is potentially hazardous to the members using it. This is in many cases at no fault of the Department but a realization of the lack of financial resources to purchase compliant equipment. I'm sure there isn't a Fire Chief out there that doesn't want the best possible equipment he can get for his or her firefighters, but there may not be the means to achieve this.

After the attacks on September 11, 2001 the mission of the American Fire Service did not change. We still are sworn to protect life and property. Our mission or scope however was broadened. This broadening has also added to the financial burden that Fire Departments face. The increased and very important new scope now includes the necessity to be prepared for Weapons of Mass Destruction incidents, hazardous materials incidents, collapse rescue, confined space rescue and several more areas. While every Fire Department can't be proficient in every one of these areas, at least basic understanding and preparation is necessary. This basic level to the

highest level means some additional financial burden to the Fire Department. The Federal and State governments have done very well in helping to offset these costs as much as possible but there are still associated expenditures to this.

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program is a very positive and one of the most beneficial steps the Federal Government has taken in assisting Emergency Responders in America in recent years. In order for this program to continue to benefit emergency responders, the program needs to continue to be funded so that more and more departments can benefit by having the safest equipment available.

The Federal Government should not bare the entire burden of funding first responders. State and local officials must continue to look for ways to fund emergency services at a level that first and foremost is safe for the responders, and is of the highest quality and most technically advanced for those we serve. Unfortunately, funding equipment purchases is only one portion of the problem facing the American Fire Service today. An equally important problem is staffing. Having an adequate number of people at incidents to safely and effectively ensure a positive outcome is paramount. Staffing issues continue to plague both the career and volunteer Fire Services. Fire Departments working in conjunction with local, State and Federal Government need to be continuously looking for ways to fund additional career firefighters as well as initiatives to not only encourage people to volunteer but ways to retain personnel currently volunteering. There needs to be incentives for those that choose to volunteer whether it is tax relief, discounted or free tuition in State colleges, low interest mortgages, retirement or health benefits. Whatever it may be, something drastic needs to be done before membership levels drop any lower. In order for these initiatives, or initiatives of this type, to happen, cooperation between all levels of government will be necessary in order to share in the potential financial burden. Without these initiatives and creativity in the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters, all the high tech and safest equipment in the world can't be of benefit if there is no one to use it.

Every year in the United States approximately one hundred members of the Fire Service loose their lives in the line of duty. What is most dramatic about this is that since the 1970s and '80s the number of structure fires annually has decreased. Another very disturbing part of this is that a large portion of the one hundred deaths is a result of heart attacks. The USFA has done an excellent job and needs to continue research and promote the health and safety of firefighters, specifically through continued trained members in building construction, the effects of buildings on fire, self rescue and Get Out Alive Program techniques. Something needs to be done to reduce the number of heart attack related deaths through screening and fitness directives. I cannot think of a more important program than insuring the welfare of our Emergency Responders. The information gained, from Health and Safety Technical Reports to the Everyone Goes Home: Life Safety Summit, is information that is beneficial to the American Fire Service and needs to continue. The USFA needs to continue to provide technical reports on ways to reduce firefighter death and injury in an effort to continuously educate Fire Departments of the hazards before it's too late.

The USFA is an invaluable resource for information, the sharing of information and training. The USFA website is a valuable resource of information through it's Trade Net site, reports and publications as well as hundreds of opportunities for training whether in the field, on-line, or at the National Fire Academy. Although I have never taken the opportunity to attend a training course at the National Academy, I have been told that the facilities, instructors and curriculum are second to none. As we constantly remind ourselves TRAINING is the backbone of emergency services and failing to train is training to fail.

In conclusion there are several challenges facing the Fire Service today. Many local governments are struggling to maintain the level of service they provide today from a financial and a personnel stand point. With that said, some of these very important programs like health and fitness can not be implemented due to lack of funds or resources. Without the help of the State and Federal Government these additional programs cannot become a reality. Additionally, the Federal Government needs to continue to fund grant programs like the Fire Act to help municipalities meet some of their basic needs.

BIOGRAPHY FOR DAVID T. PERKINS

FIRE DEPARTMENT BIOGRAPHY

The Aurelius Fire Department is located in central Cayuga County and is a suburb on the west side of the City of Auburn, New York. The Fire Department was established in 1945 and is governed by the Aurelius Fire District, which consists

of five Fire Commissioners. The Fire Department protects approximately 30.2 square miles with a population of approximately 3200 permanent residents. Due to the number of commercial establishments within the town the population triples and even quadruples during business hours. The Fire Department functions with approximately sixty members. Thirty of the members provide active service. The Department operates out of two Stations performing Fire, Rescue and First Response EMS Service to the residents of our community. As well as providing specialized services to our neighboring Towns under mutual aid agreements. In 2003 the Fire Department responded to 289 alarms consisting of 86 Fire related incidents and 203 EMS related incidents. Our members spent 6542.82 hours this year involved in Fire Department related functions with 3192.98 hours answering alarms and 2234.95 hours spent training and 1114.89 hours conducting other Fire Department operations.

PERSONAL BIOGRAPHY

My name is David T. Perkins and I am a Firefighter/EMT and Training Officer with the Aurelius Volunteer Fire Department located in central Cayuga County near Auburn, New York. I was born in Auburn, New York and raised in near by Scipio Center, New York in southern Cayuga County. I am a graduate of Southern Cayuga Central School as well as a graduate of Broome Community College with an Associate's degree in Fire Protection.

My fire service career started in 1986 when I joined the Scipio Volunteer Fire Company as their first 16-year-old member. I held every line officer position in the Company including two years as Fire Chief. In 1997 I relocated to Aurelius, New York and joined the Aurelius Volunteer Fire Company where I have held several line officer positions including Assistant Chief. In addition to my duties with the Aurelius Fire Department, I am also employed part-time by Cayuga County Emergency Services as a Deputy Fire Coordinator in the 3rd Battalion.

I currently am employed by E-One New York located in Preble, New York whose primary business purpose is the manufacture of Firefighting Vehicles. I reside in Aurelius with my wife Tammy and my daughters Taylre (age 5) and Grace (age 2).

June 18, 2004

The Honorable Sherwood Boehlert
Chairman, Science Committee
2320 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Boehlert:

Thank you for the invitation to testify before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Science on June 21st for the hearing entitled *The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program: A View From Upstate New York*. In accordance with the Rules Governing Testimony, this letter serves as formal notice of the federal funding I currently receive in support of my research.

- \$119,804.00, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (Fire Act), Received FY 2003

Sincerely,



David T. Perkins
Training Officer/Firefighter
Aurelius Volunteer Fire Department

Chairman BOEHLERT. Now our final witness comes from the Office of Emergency Management and is Fire Coordinator for Cayuga County, Mr. Pat DiNonno.

STATEMENT OF PAT DINONNO, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND FIRE COORDINATOR FOR CAYUGA COUNTY

Mr. DiNonno. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Miller, for the opportunity to testify to this hearing today.

Our office is a multi-phased office, it's not just Emergency Management. Within our office is the Fire Coordinators Division and an EMS Coordinators Division. Both of those divisions have a coordinator and five or six deputies underneath them. They are all very, very minimally paid, part-time employees. They work many hours, they're on call 24/7, and they are, as I said, very minimally paid. Basically in some cases it's a token for their time that they serve.

The coordinators serve as a liaison between the fire departments and/or emergency medical services and our Emergency Management office. They are also an on-scene resource to the command

corp at any event that they are called out to or on an automatic call-out, depending on the type of incident.

The fire coordinator is a point of contact for the New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control, OSHA PESH issues, other health and safety issues, and state and local mutual aid. They are also in charge of three of our county teams—I'm sorry, four of our county teams: a HAZMAT team, a high angle rescue team, fire investigation team, and also our fire advisory board. They are also the contact point for the County Fire Training Tower Facility, which has been in operation less than a year.

That facility had been talked about for more than 50 years and finally is truly a place where we can go and train. It is being used as we talk. Currently, along with members of the Auburn Fire Department we have the Department of Corrections people there training for their work together with Emergency Services. They are also the contact point for homeland security issues and the New York State Fire Instructors, who provide the fire service training to all the fire departments that would like to take use of their expertise within the county. With these services they are paid instructors by New York State, we are their contact point. They provide the state-certified courses, we provide the office support. We do the class scheduling with the instructors and the fire departments. We help set up for the classes and we send out notifications to all the departments so that they know when the classes are available, and they in turn register for those classes.

We are also tied to the fire coordinator's office notification for fire training classes available to other sources such as the Federal Government, some of which have already been named today, such as FEMA classes, the MI institute, the Anniston, Alabama programs, and the ones in Las Vegas and New Mexico. And there are other training programs that are provided through local resources and/or people that—or organizations that are paid to come in and provide some in-service training for all our departments.

On the EMS coordinator's side of the program they too are an on-scene resource, and they too are points of contact for the New York State Department of Health for OSHA PESH issues, for health and safety issues, for state and local mutual aid, and also for the county teams, as I already mentioned, the HAZMAT team. We also have a critical incident stress management team which is very useful out there for the many incidences that these people get involved with and then later have to go back and try to deal with after hours.

The EMS Advisory Board and homeland security issues. The medical training is provided through our office with the help of a medical director who oversees the New York State Department of Health training programs. These programs certify our EMTs that are out in the field and actually serving the communities by providing care to the sick and injured. The medical director is responsible to review all the curriculum coming out of New York State to be sure that it is presented properly at our classes; the hiring of instructors, we do all of that through our office. We hire the instructors; the instructors are working for us. We handle the book sales for the courses so that these students don't have to go out and pay exorbitant fees for the books.

Purchasing, maintaining training equipment and supplies, this is a very, very expensive portion of the program. The training equipment for medical training is very expensive, gets well used during our classes, and it has a point in time where it eventually wears out and needs to be totally upgraded or replaced. We also provide for all the scheduling of these classes along with notification for all EMS units.

The challenges and needs of the responders in our county, they've already been addressed to some degree here by the other participants, but in my view manpower shortages currently are one of the biggest issues that we face. Many times there are very limited personnel at emergency scenes, especially in the daytime when the people are out earning their money so they can raise and support their families.

There are strained budgets for personnel in the paid departments, manpower levels in all the departments, along with the volunteers, as I stated, daytime staffing. In some cases some of these departments now are going to minimally paid employees to help offset some of that staffing need.

We foresee the need in the future that this will expand, and it has already expanded into some of our county EMS departments. In order to get a guaranteed response, people are on staff now in this department. So as such, recruitment and retention is our big issue here for our volunteer departments, whether they be for the fire and/or the EMS.

We need some programs to address this issue. I don't have an answer, I don't have a lot of suggestions. We have tried to cope with this in the past with committees, and it just seems that nobody has come up with the right answer yet. To me, that is our number one issue.

The second issue that's compounded in our county is communications, not only for fire and EMS, but law enforcement also. We are a county that has a lake in the middle of it, a lake on each side of it, and a lake on the north end of it. The lakes create all the different valleys, and the radio waves don't seem to want to follow the routes where the fire trucks and the ambulances and police cars are, so we have a lot of problems.

Chairman BOEHLERT. Those lakes are a blessing, but they also pose some challenges.

Mr. DiNONNO. Yes, they do. Our outdated radio systems do not allow for adequate communications and become a safety issue for all the first responders, as I said, fire, EMS, and law enforcement.

And new also to first responders now with the homeland security issues are our Health Department people and our DPW crews. They are also now a part of our emergency response procedures. They need to be involved in some of these issues also. Our need for interoperable radio systems is probably a number one priority after manpower. Manpower we can't throw a lot of money into unless we're going to pay people to come in, but money can help the communication problem.

Training: Training provides adequate safety for our responders. But again, due to limited funding, we are not always able to do the training that we need. Funding is needed for a training facility to help us put up a classroom. It is also needed to help us put in a

propane burn unit. Unfortunately, in the grants program county facilities are not allowed to participate. I would ask that somewhere in the future that county facilities be included under these grant programs. I think the county facilities can give you a bigger bang for your buck as far as the numbers of people that get trained.

Funding is also needed for the outside training where people are being sent to seminars and conferences and the other programs that have been mentioned previously.

Equipment purchases: We need to maintain, again, this funding for all the personal protective equipment, some of which is displayed over there on the table to your left that was recently purchased here in Auburn. Rescue equipment needs to be replaced; EMS medical equipment needs to be replaced; and vehicles need to be replaced.

As far as the federal, State, and local roles, with my office I think all government needs to know exactly what functions all the offices involved are. A lot of times we just assume things but we aren't really sure what is actually going on until some disaster happens, and then we wonder where things are or where things aren't.

We need to—the State, Federal, and local governments need to support our constituents and initiatives for public safety, including all the homeland security issues that are out there now. As was stated previously by one of the other speakers, whether you're dealing with a manmade or a natural disaster, the same functions have been endured and made a homeland security issue.

For federal support, the continued fire service grant programs is a must, funded to the highest amounts possible, and I know that somewhere down there the well stops producing water. We also need to continue the Homeland Security Grant Programs through the WMDs program. But we need for those programs to have realistic time frames. Currently we get requests to participate in these programs and we have about two weeks to put the application in. And a lot of times we're not putting the application in properly because they're given the training after the fact, and they're telling us what's wrong. Tell us what's—

Chairman BOEHLERT. That's DHS you're talking about. DHS, Department of Homeland Security.

Mr. DiNONNO. Yes.

Chairman BOEHLERT. Not the Fire Assistance Grant Program.

Mr. DiNONNO. Yes.

Chairman BOEHLERT. Are you about ready to wrap it up?

Mr. DiNONNO. Yes. The grant application should allow for more user-friendly grant writing procedures. And again, it's the DHS we're talking about. Very cumbersome, very ambiguous format, time consuming, and a waste of personnel, and in some cases it's not cost effective for the amount of money that we are getting in return. All of our emergency management offices are minimally staffed and do not have persons available at a given minute to put this program together.

Counter-terrorist support. We need to continue the funding, as I had stated. The traditional first responder programs are minimal training programs, and we need to continually upgrade those pro-

grams to reflect on the homeland security issues. We need to develop new and advanced terrorism training programs.

Chairman BOEHLERT. Mr. DiNonno, could I ask you to submit the remainder of your statement? Because we're getting in Department of Homeland Security issues, which are very important, but the thrust of this hearing is to deal with the Assistance to Firefighters Program.

And I think you would acknowledge that this program is a well-run program. You're probably suggesting that the rest of the Department of Homeland Security model their efforts after what we're doing here.

Mr. DiNonno. Absolutely.

Chairman BOEHLERT. Well, your statement will appear in the record in its entirety.

[The prepared statement of Mr. DiNonno follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PAT D. DINONNO

Background on the responsibilities and activities in the Cayuga County Emergency Management Office:

Currently the office consists of the following full time personnel:

- Director of Emergency Services, Pat DiNonno
- Deputy Director of Emergency Management, Victoria Chamberlain
- Administrative Officer for Emergency Medical Services, Margaret Mach
- Secretary/Typist, Joy Pamplun

The following are part-time personnel:

- (1) Deputy Director for Fire/Rescue Services, Ed Laraway
- (6) Deputy Fire Coordinators
- Medical Director for Emergency Medical Services
- Deputy Director for Emergency Medical Services, Roman Rotko
- (5) Deputy Emergency Medical Coordinators

The following are approximately number of contractual personnel:

- (8) EMS Certified Instructor/Coordinators
- (21) EMS Certified Laboratory Instructors
- (21) EMS Practical Work Instructors

The following are approximately number of volunteer personnel:

- (20) Auxiliary Police Officers
- (35) Amateur Radio Operators
- (25) High Angle Rescue Team Members
- (25) Fire Investigation Team Members and
- (10) Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Team Members

ROLE

The mission statement for the Emergency Management Office is "to provide for life, safety, property and environment protection from all natural and manmade hazards that may occur within Cayuga County through a comprehensive and integrated emergency management planning and execution system approach."

The role of the office is multi-faceted, but basically includes training and education of emergency services personnel and the public. It also includes coordinating preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery of all agencies and personnel to any potential or actual manmade or natural disaster that threatens life, property and/or the environment in Cayuga County. The severe weather events are: flood, drought, hurricane, tornado, winter storm, ice storm. Also, the office handles events such as hazardous material or radiological release, airplane crash, train derailment, dam failure, long term power failure, mass casualty incidents or act of domestic terrorism.

Our office routinely provides resource information and interacts with Fire, Emergency Medical, Law Enforcement, the American Red Cross, the New York State Health Department, the County Health Department, the Planning Department and the New York State Weapons of Mass Destruction Taskforce on a wide range of issues. We function as the coordinator between local and State/Federal Government in matters related to Federal Grant/Loan monies. We provide Emergency Medical, CPR and Fire training for all county first responders.

When a State of Emergency has been declared (whether it be a County, State, or federal) our office becomes very active and is the key communication and contact center. When a Presidential Declaration is declared affecting Cayuga County, our office staff and coordinators provide information for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the State Emergency Management office (SEMO). We provide assistance during the emergency and through the recovery operation process to individuals, municipalities, or businesses. FEMA and SEMO agency representatives are given office space and staff support from our office which allows them to service eligible entities.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL & FIRE TRAINING

We provide Emergency Medical training for all EMS responders using State Health Department Programs and Curriculum. Fire training is provided with State Fire Instructors teaching State Fire Service Courses for all fire departments.

POLICIES

The Emergency Management Office works closely and cooperatively with the Cayuga County Chapter of the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the New York State Health Department, Schools, Nursing Homes, Residential Centers (Adult Care and Day Care), County Government, the County Health Department, the County Planning Department, Towns, Villages, the City of Auburn and the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) in planning and preparedness for any potential manmade or natural disaster. In addition, this office will communicate with, support and assist these organizations in any way necessary and possible before, during and after any disaster relative to the provision and coordination of human needs.

OPERATIONS

The Emergency Management Office can activate our County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) anytime it is needed. In the event that it becomes necessary, the Cayuga County Emergency Management Office will provide supplemental and/or primary communications between the organizations and the EOC by the use of RACES personnel (Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services). Further, this office will coordinate the provision of any other support services or functions as necessary.

Present your views on the legislation:

I am in complete support of the *Assistance to Firefighters Grant Reauthorization Act of 2004*. This legislation has, in the past, allowed various fire departments to obtain funding for equipment, training and communications which otherwise would have not been obtained because of limited budget resources. To continue this program would guarantee those departments awarded funding under the program to provide essential services within their response area. This will assure that the department members are properly trained and equipped with the necessary safety equipment and vehicles. The addition to this legislation will include grant awards to EMS response for volunteer medical service squads as an important features which I support.

How does your office coordinate with Cayuga County Fire Departments?

The Fire Coordinator's office is an integral part of our office staffed with a Fire Coordinator and Deputy Fire Coordinator who are minimal, part time employees and compensated sparsely although they may work long hours. They are the liaison between the individual fire departments in their district and our Emergency Management Office and a point of contact for:

NYS Office of Fire Prevention and Control, OSHA/PESH, health and safety issues, State and local mutual aid, Hazardous Materials Team, Fire Investigation Team, High Angle Rescue Team, the County Fire Training Tower, Fire Advisory Board and Homeland Security.

Our office provides fire training with State Fire Instructors who teach State Fire Service Courses for all fire departments. We provide office support and point of contact for the State Fire Instructors. In addition, we set up class schedules and provide notification to all first responders for all available classes.

The EMS Coordinator's office is another integral part of our office staffed with an EMS Coordinator and Deputy EMS Coordinator who are also minimal, part-time employees. They are the liaison between the individual EMS units in their district and the Emergency Management Office. They are a resource for information and a point of contact for:

NYS Department of Health, OSHA/PESH, health and safety issues, State and local mutual aid, Hazardous Materials Team, Critical Incident Stress Management Team (CISM), EMS Advisory Board and Homeland Security.

In addition, the EMS Office provides all of the State Certified medical training for all EMS and employs a Medical Director who oversees the State Health Department Programs and Curriculum. The EMS office duties encompasses all aspects from hiring of instructors to sale of books, review of curriculum and purchasing and maintaining training equipment and supplies.

What issues present the greatest challenges for first responders (including police, EMS and others) in your area:

One challenge is being able to function adequately with limited personnel at emergency scenes.

Another challenge is trying to communicate with outdated radio systems that do not allow complete and adequate communication coverage between those on the scene and the 9-1-1 Communication Center.

It is a challenge to try to provide adequate training for first responders without enough financial resources.

What are the most pressing needs in terms of equipment, staffing, training, communication:

The most critical issue is manpower shortage for all responding agencies. Budgets are strained for manpower within the paid departments.

Recruitment and retention is an on-going problem within the volunteer departments. Programs need to be developed to assist in recruitment and a form of reward for volunteer services. There is a need to maintain funding for needed equipment such as personal protective equipment, rescue equipment, EMS medical equipment and new vehicle purchases is pressing.

Within the communication area, there is also a need for new inter-operable radio systems.

There is an urgent need for financial resources to complete the Fire Training Center that will include a classroom building and a propane fueled burn room. Currently the Assistance to Firefighters Grant do not allow for funding to be used in a county facility. Completing our Fire Training Center would allow all county fire departments better use of the facility.

There is a crucial financial need to send first responders for classroom training, conference and seminars and other related expenses.

What are the appropriate roles of Federal, State and local governments in helping your office meet its responsibilities to protect the public:

In order to support our office, the levels of government need to know exactly what functions our office is responsible for and to support our decision and initiatives for public safety.

In what ways can the Federal Government, in particular the Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Fire Administration, improve its support for offices like yours?

Continue fire service grant programs for individual fire departments.

To improve support, we would like changes in the Homeland Security grant programs. First, we would like a realistic time frame to complete the application with training. Second, that they can be written in a user-friendly manner. This will allow for flexible decision-making and make it easier to spend the funds for what we determine is the need.

How should the Federal Government balance support for counter-terrorism activities with that of more traditional first responder programs?

Additional funding needs to be provided for counter-terrorist activities through Homeland Security grant programs. Traditional first responder programs are minimum training programs and need to be continually upgraded to reflect Homeland Security issues.

Personal Comments:

Located at the Cayuga Community College is the “Institute for the Application of Geospatial Technology” (IAGT) led by Chief Executive, Robert N. Brower. This Institute has a highly sophisticated computer system that can be utilized for responder training, emergency preplanning and during actual emergency events. After the 9/11 Terrorist Attack, various Cayuga County emergency personnel were utilized by the IAGT to aid New York City Emergency Responders in their recovery efforts. I highly recommend promotion of this organization as stated above.

I would support additional legislation that would allow funding grants for county owned training facilities.

BIOGRAPHY FOR PAT D. DiNONNO

Work-related Background:

- 32 years experience as a member of Auburn Fire Department retiring with rank of Assistant Chief
- 11 years experience as Hazardous Materials Coordinator for Cayuga County
- four years experience as Director of Emergency Services for Cayuga County
- Adjunct State Fire Instructor
- Homeland Security point of contact for Cayuga County
- Active member of:
 - Fire Advisory Board
 - EMS Advisory Board
 - Local Emergency Planning Committee
 - Citizen Corp Council
 - Cayuga County Association of Emergency Services
 - New York State Emergency Management Association

Educational Experience

AAS Fire Science, Cayuga Community College

Military Background

eight years Coast Guard Reserve

DISCUSSION

Chairman BOEHLERT. Just let me say a couple of things. First of all, you have mentioned specifically, and Chief McQueen did, but I’m sure Mr. Perkins and Chief Quill had mentioned recruitment and retention problems.

Now, Chief, with a paid department you probably don’t have as serious a problem with that as they do with the volunteers, but things have changed. And so under the new SAFER Act—and this is not the purpose of this hearing, but another bill that I’ve introduced—under the new SAFER Act there will be assistance, and we’ve got \$50 million approval in this Congress to launch that assistance to hire personnel with a combination of federal dollars and local dollars. So that’s something that’s very important.

Secondly, Mr. Perkins, I’m so pleased that you mentioned the health and wellness programs. Because a lot of people will look at this overall plan and say you mean you’re giving out federal grants to departments for health and wellness programs. What do they do, exercise? The answer is yes. And as you pointed out, of the 100 firefighters who lost their lives in the line of duty last year, half of them did so from heart attacks. And if you had a good health and wellness program, maybe some of those could have been prevented. So I thank you for that, and we’re going to continue that.

But I want to stress for Mr. DiNonno's benefit particularly the importance of getting out information on this Assistance to Firefighters Program. What a number of my colleagues have said to me, how come your area is doing so well, is it because you're chairman of the committee? And the answer is no, not because I'm chairman of the committee, it's because we have had training seminars for all our firefighters. We had one at Cayuga College, Chief, and your people were there, and so were your people, Mr. Perkins. We had one in Whitesboro. We had over 100 people come to that program from fire companies all around the surrounding area.

Because quite honestly, most volunteer fire companies, even the paid companies, you don't have a grant writer on staff, you don't have experience in writing grants. Now, Chief McQueen is very eloquent, he does a good job. But I'll tell you—well, I won't tell you, I'll ask you, how important were those training seminars for your company in providing you with the information you needed to tailor your application that ultimately proved successful? Chief Quill.

Mr. QUILL. Thank you, Mr. Boehlert.

Chairman BOEHLERT. And let's try to make our answers and questions short if we can.

Mr. QUILL. It was excellent training. Mr. Mike Penna, I believe he works for FEMA, he was in both Cayuga Community College and in Geneva this last year. He did an excellent job. It's terrific information. It's information for a firefighter on the firefighter's level to compete in these grants. Excellent.

Chairman BOEHLERT. Thank you, Chief. How about you, Chief McQueen?

Mr. MCQUEEN. Same thing, Congressman. We also had Mike Penna. It was very fruitful for me. I mean, I had struck out two times, but it wasn't going to keep us down. And every time I went back into these training sessions I picked up different aspects of the grant that would make it more successful. I was very pleased. He did a great job.

Chairman BOEHLERT. Mr. Perkins.

Mr. PERKINS. Same response. I think it becomes an interpretation, how certain parts of the application are interpreted, and we were able to face-to-face ask FEMA what our interpretation was versus theirs and get a resolution to that.

Chairman BOEHLERT. I say this for the benefit of Mr. Miller visiting from North Carolina. Now, not all the districts around the country have these training seminars, and I'm trying to encourage Members of the Committee to do it, because you give the local fire company the knowledge, the procedure to follow, and they can develop a good application to justify what they're asking for, the life-saving equipment like this that's turned out here, breathing apparatus.

Invariably here is my experience: I'll get someone from a fire company that says, gee, I heard about this new program. How come we didn't get any money? I'll say, one, did you apply? And the answer is, well, no. How do you expect to get money if you didn't apply? Two, did anyone from your fire department go to the training seminar? We had one at Cayuga College, we had one in Whitesboro, we had one in Geneva. I've had them all over the dis-

strict. Well, no. Well, look, this money is not money from heaven; you don't just pray for it, you have to earn it.

So we'll continue to have these programs. And before I turn it over to Mr. Miller, we're going to rotate back and forth with questions, I just want to tell you some good news. The President of the United States and the administration support the continuation of this program, support my basic legislation initiative program. The question we're going to have to decide is how much. And it won't surprise any of you to learn that there's a lot of competition for funds in Washington.

And Mr. DiNonno, you just outlined a request for a lot more, and I understand that. And my view is I'm going to try to get as much federal assistance for our programs as we can, which eases the burden on local governments which essentially have to raise money through property taxes. So we don't want our property taxes to increase.

And the Federal Government collects money through the fairest way I know, the graduated income tax. If you earn more money next year, you probably will take a little more on taxes, but you don't mind it because you're earning more. But property taxes, you can be unemployed and your property taxes go up. So one of the things we do in addition to helping fire companies is try to ease the pressure locally on property taxes.

With that, let me refer to—turn the questions over to Mr. Miller, and I will take leave for just two minutes and be right back. Mr. Miller.

Mr. MILLER. Thank you. I have questions along the same lines. First of all, Chairman Boehlert's idea of having a grant-writing workshop for fire departments in this district was an outstanding idea. It's the first I had heard of that. My view is that when you hear a great idea, pause briefly to admire it and then promptly steal it. And I certainly plan to do that in my own district where I have a mix of—well, what we in North Carolina think of urban areas, perhaps you have a different definition of urban areas in New York. We consider Raleigh an urban area, Raleigh or Greensboro. But there is still a vast need in a town like Raleigh or Greensboro to go through the grant writing process, etc.

And Caswell County in my district has a population of 23,500. I don't know the per capita income, it's low. The percentage of the adult population that do not have a high school diploma is possibly a little higher than 40 percent. And in that county of 23,500 there are ten volunteer fire departments. They work together.

But certainly going through grants is something that they would never have done before, and I wonder how well this is working for them.

I know that you've had the unfair advantage of this grant-writing workshop that Chairman Boehlert put on, but would it be your experience in dealing with the grants process through the fire command, is there an advantage that the bigger towns have or counties that have got more folks on their staff, actually have a staff, perhaps have a volunteer—have a grant writer, etc., or are the forms and the application procedure understandable enough, easy enough to deal with that small departments, people, volunteer, part time,

can do it at nights and on weekends and get it done and have a fair shot? Chief Quill.

Mr. QUILL. Mr. Miller, I'm sure you're aware that all the grants are reviewed by fellow firefighters; they do not need to be a grant writer. Firefighters speak a certain language, as with any other business. And it is reviewed by firefighters. Firefighter—I can explain to Chief McQueen here what I need, or Mr. Perkins or Mr. DiNonno, whereas someone from your staff or the Science Committee would have no idea what I'm talking about. So that system works very well.

My own personal belief is that there are more smaller volunteer departments that are receiving the grants than the actual paid departments and larger departments that are requesting it. That's just a personal assumption on my part.

Mr. MILLER. Chief McQueen.

Mr. MCQUEEN. I can agree with you there, Chief. We are one of the larger departments in Oneida County as volunteer, but it does seem that there's a recurrence of grants to smaller departments within our county.

As regards to the process, I always conduct a needs assessment with my officers to see what we want to apply for, discuss that with my village officials. I put the grant together. The online form is very easy to use. I have the capabilities of giving the narrative to an English teacher to have her review it for me, so I know that everything is done correctly there. But it is very easy to do and it's very user-friendly.

Mr. MILLER. Mr. Perkins.

Mr. PERKINS. Mr. Miller, I think it's been our experience that the application process is very easy to use and get through. As I said, some of these forms we're able to convey some questions we have about interpretations of certain parts of the application.

But I still would agree that across the country, whether it's lack of these forms or what, there are still a certain degree of people out there that are probably in far more of a need for this equipment than we are that aren't either taking advantage of it or don't have the resources in house to apply for those grants.

Mr. MILLER. How can we—what do we need to do to improve that, to make sure that the less well off departments still have reasonable access to these programs? This is not—this program is not another example of the old saying that them's that has gets. This doesn't intend to benefit the bigger departments.

Mr. PERKINS. I don't know necessarily that that's entirely the case, because I think that there are departments out there that have far fewer resources than we have at our disposal and have more grants. I don't have an answer to how you get that out there with more people. Usually when you say free money, that usually perks people up. So going through the grant application for free money is pretty simple, so—

Mr. MILLER. Mr. DiNonno, if you want to address that too.

Mr. DINONNO. One of the things that our office does is to pass on information such as this to all the departments within our county. And any time Mr. Boehlert sends notices out for any of these training programs, if we get them in a timely manner we in turn

put that information back out to the departments to inform them of these training classes that are out there.

Mr. MILLER. A similar question or similar concern is about the match required. You say it's free money. It's not quite free, there is a requirement of a match. Has that requirement of a match proven to be an impediment for smaller, less—again, less well-financed departments, or is that working pretty well.

I mean, obviously to get a piece of equipment like it for only 10 or 20 or 30 percent of the cost is a huge, huge advantage, but has that requirement for match proven to be a problem for some departments? Chief Quill.

Mr. QUILL. It has not been a problem in my department, but at the same time, the 10 percent that we had to contribute back for how we had to come up with the money for our matching grant, that's more equipment that we could have been furnishing our firefighters with. Presently it's not really a hindrance. It could be addressed and something done a little better with it. So we could be able to use that 10 percent; we could have used it.

Mr. MILLER. Do you know of any cases of departments around here that have not applied or perhaps even won a grant and been unable to come up with a match?

Mr. QUILL. Not to my knowledge, no.

Mr. MILLER. Chief McQueen.

Mr. MCQUEEN. I know there have been departments in our county that have not applied, and I think that was one of the reasons. I think if that percentage was lower, then you'll find more departments in the range of 15 to 20 volunteer firefighters will be able to enhance their fire, life-saving protection by applying with a lower matching fund.

Mr. MILLER. Mr. Perkins.

Mr. PERKINS. I would agree, Mr. Miller, with the two gentlemen ahead of me on that. We personally did not have trouble with that. It's obviously better if you can give your Board of Commissioners and our department a little more warning that that may be coming so that we can budget appropriately for it. But as Chief Quill said, that 10 percent is money that would be better spent—not necessarily better spent, but could be used in better ways for equipment also.

Mr. MILLER. Is it your sense that there's some inequity between the various departments in how well they can take advantage of this grants program, again, in a case where the richer departments do better or can seek more help than smaller departments?

Mr. PERKINS. The 10 percent may be a detriment to some departments. I don't know of any specific examples in our county that that didn't happen. That's very possible that that 10 percent may have deterred some people from applying.

Mr. DiNONNO. I think you have to look at the issue of the dollar amount that they're applying for and what the 10 percent actually is. And for some of the smaller departments it probably is a burden to come up with some larger amounts if they in turn are going to ask for a larger grant award.

Mr. MILLER. I think all of you mentioned how relatively easy this grant process is, the fact that it's other firemen, other firefighters, other professionals who are reviewing the applications and they

speaking your language and they understand what you're telling them. That they—you know, they know what goes on around here, they know what breathing apparatus is, they know why you need it, and that makes it much easier.

Have any of you been part of that peer-review process? Have any of you been among those reviewing the grants?

Mr. QUILL. No, sir.

Mr. MCQUEEN. No, sir.

Mr. PERKINS. No, sir.

Mr. MILLER. Do you know anyone from this area who has, from the area? No.

Chairman BOEHLERT. It's my understanding that FEMA's asked for volunteers to participate in this program, and so often when you have the volunteer companies they've got full-time jobs in addition to what they're doing with their volunteer company. But we have a number of New Yorkers that have participated in a peer-review panel, it just so happens that present company has not participated. Not for lack of desire, but lack of opportunity in line with all the rest of their very heavy schedule. We've got one in the audience.

Mr. ASWAED. I'd like to comment on just that last question.

Chairman BOEHLERT. Please stand up.

Mr. ASWAED. My name's Mark Aswaed. I'm a fire chief from Fleming and Throop Fire Department.

In regards to your question is 10 percent machining fund equitable for all departments, and that is a resounding no. I want everybody to realize that for what we're representing here in this county, 10 percent is doable for most of the projects we're applying for.

But I—aside from being fire chief of Fleming, my full-time job is selling fire apparatus. And I deal with fire departments throughout New York and northern Pennsylvania. And there's departments out there that do not apply for the grants because they just cannot afford the 10 percent. They might want to buy a couple sets of turn-out gear, but that is beyond their means with a matching 10 percent.

So I just wanted to make sure—when you ask that question, I wanted to make sure you folks understood that there are departments out there making—or operating off \$1,400 a year in operating budget. There's just no way that they can afford, you know, five percent.

So if there is a means of looking at that aspect, there's going to be a lot more smaller departments that could take advantage of some of this so-called free government money.

Chairman BOEHLERT. Thanks very much. Mark, would you give your name to the reporter so she can get it for the official record.

Mr. ASWAED. Mark Aswaed, A-S-W-A-E-D.

Mr. MILLER. My concern is I do want to make it available to the poorer departments. On the other hand, I don't want to have a way to come up with identifying the poorer departments by having them fill out a 25-page form, which goes to the other problem that we've got of making the program accessible.

Is that something—you said you hadn't really observed it. Do you think that that would be a helpful thing to have some kind of ad-

justment in the program, the Fire Grant Program, for those departments that really don't have a resource?

Mr. QUILL. I agree that would be very helpful. For smaller departments that cannot come up with 10 percent, it would certainly be helpful. I don't know how we would go about it, but I think it would be well suited.

Chairman BOEHLERT. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Miller.

One of the things we did when I tailored this initiative program is to—we want to make sure that we don't supplant local contributions, and there is always the danger that when the Federal Government comes up with a new program, local governments say, oh, this relieves us of any burden, and they'll withdraw the support. So if you get a dollar from Washington but lose a dollar from home, you're no farther ahead.

And I tailored this after and I've had experience, I'm a previous chairman of a subcommittee on water resources and the environment, and we set up a state revolving fund for water projects, drinking water and wastewater treatment. And that's a loan program.

And one of the things we did, and Mark, to address your specific question, we recognized there are some legitimate hardship cases, hardship communities. So maybe we ought to think about some sort of provision in the bill that would address the legitimate hardship communities.

But basically our thought is that if we require some local share, only 10 percent, that 90 percent from Washington, some local share, that spreads the money farther. If I give a 100 percent grant, well, you're going to have to give out fewer grants. We want some local participation. And we work with all the state fire associations, State of New York, the Volunteer Association, and the International Association of Fire Chiefs. We work with all these to fashion a program.

Let me ask you this: The program's been in operation three years now. You've seen it evolve; you all have experience with it. We know about the success. We know about what it's done for Auburn, allowing you to buy this gear, and we know what it's done for Whitesboro, we know what it's done for Aurelius. What is the biggest deficiency that you see? If you were sitting on this side of the table with us, what change would you make to the program, if any? I mean, you know, I'm asking you this out of the blue, you perhaps haven't thought too much about a very good program that seems to be working well, but is there any deficiency that you can think of offhand? Chief McQueen?

Mr. MCQUEEN. Actually, there's two. We need more money, one. And the second of all is feedback on why grants were not successful. Especially for departments that don't have grant writers.

Chairman BOEHLERT. The chief says to no one's surprise that we need more money for the program. And I'll tell you this: Every advocate for every program makes the same basic plea, and it's our challenge to try to sort out these things and make a difference.

So, more dollars and the feedback, so that if you submit an application, if you're not successful, you want sort of a debriefing, where did you miss the boat, what—all right, Chief Quill?

Mr. QUILL. I agree with Chief McQueen. The biggest thing is to find out why you were turned down for a particular grant; what was the reasoning behind the firefighters in Washington just giving you a thumbs down on a particular issue.

To us it may be the most important thing in the world to have, but if we don't know what we've done wrong, we can't correct it.

Chairman BOEHLERT. You know, counsel just points out that the National Science Foundation, who is under our jurisdiction with the Science Committee, and if you apply to the National Science Foundation, usually it's universities and they're applying for millions of dollars for research grants, and they don't get it, they get a written critique.

Now, it's not as easy to do a written critique when there are so many, but at least we should have some way to get a response. Maybe you can call in and reviewers would make some comment. So if you call in and you get someone that would say, well, your review indicated that you were deficient here or deficient here, that would help you for the next time around.

Mr. QUILL. At the very least a check sheet saying what was wrong; was it the narrative, was it the background information. At the very least that would be helpful to the departments.

Chairman BOEHLERT. Okay, fine. Chief McQueen is nodding his head yes.

Mr. MCQUEEN. I totally agree.

Chairman BOEHLERT. Mr. Miller? We'll go back and forth here, we just want to make it fair. We want this to sort of be a dialogue.

Mr. MILLER. Okay, thank you. Mr. DiNonno mentioned that he thought recruitment and retention was an issue that the towns were facing, the departments. That I'm sure is more true to the volunteer fire departments. He said he didn't have an answer, but do you have any—what can we do to improve the recruitment and retention of firefighters, volunteer and professional? Chief Quill.

Mr. QUILL. It's a little ironic that you're here today because going on at the same time we're interviewing for positions, vacant positions for retirees. Recruiting for us is not a problem. But having the money to hire additional personnel, that is what hurts us presently.

Hopefully the SAFER Act that Congressman Boehlert sponsored and I had the privilege of appearing in Washington for, hopefully that will help paid departments such as myself. Volunteers, recruiting retention, I really shouldn't address that; I'm not versed in that.

Mr. MILLER. Chief McQueen.

Mr. MCQUEEN. I could probably share a couple things. One of them is monetary support for a media campaign in our communities and our county. Support for a service awards program for recruitment and retention of volunteers. Some sort of tax credit. And support for those younger firefighters that join departments that want to continue going on to college and enhancing that type of a program which we have for New York State right now.

Mr. MILLER. Mr. Perkins.

Mr. PERKINS. Two things come to mind, Mr. Miller. One of them would be there are retirement programs out there currently that volunteer fire departments can take part of. Unfortunately, that is

a program that I would estimate more financially well-off fire departments take advantage of. My department is not able to be part of that program because of the financial constraints.

Chairman BOEHLERT. What would be the initial contribution for that program? I know some of the volunteer companies, very limited number, have gone into the program, and that's an incentive, inducement to get people to sign. But what would it cost Aurelius, for example, if you decided to go with that program?

Mr. PERKINS. I don't know, Mr. Chairman, I'm not aware of what that number is.

Chairman BOEHLERT. But it's big bucks; it is more than your availability.

Mr. PERKINS. It's my understanding that it is a fairly substantial amount of money. And I know that the departments that have tried it, it's been successful and it's had mixed results on how successful it is. Unfortunately, we don't have the opportunity to test that to see if it is successful or not.

Another thing that's always on everybody's mind, maybe some sort of efforts for health care for volunteer firefighters, something to help for health insurance. There are, I'm sure, a large number of volunteer firefighters out there that have no health insurance coverage in one form or another. So there's two areas there that probably would be beneficial.

Mr. MCQUEEN. If I could just add one more. When I talk about the tax credit, it would be a federal income tax reduction for all fire and ambulance personnel.

Mr. MILLER. I'm sorry, say that again.

Mr. MCQUEEN. A federal income tax reduction for both fire and EMS.

Chairman BOEHLERT. Let me ask you this: You know that it's changed with the new Department of Homeland Security, this new operation. So now the Office of Domestic Preparedness has sort of taken over this grant program. Do you have any direct experience and comment on the change from where it was under FEMA to now under ODP, or has that not touched you yet?

Mr. MCQUEEN. Well, it hasn't touched us yet. The only thing I'd like to say is I just hope it doesn't take away and just focus on one thing in Homeland Security, I want it to focus on public fire education, I want it to focus on fire EMS, give it the total picture, not just homeland security.

Chairman BOEHLERT. Chief Quill.

Mr. QUILL. I agree. I don't want us to get lost into another bureaucracy where our money is channeled to other areas. Everything is important, but I would prefer that it stay with the fire service. That's who needs the monies right now is fire service.

Chairman BOEHLERT. Mr. Perkins.

Mr. PERKINS. I would agree with that also, Chairman. We've had a great relationship with the people at FEMA. Any questions that we've had about our grants, any changes that were needed—that we needed to make, the person on the other end of the phone is very well versed on the fire service, understood our needs and any changes we needed to make, and the red tape to this point has been very minimal.

We have concerns also that with it going into a different bureau that we may get lost in the works to a certain degree.

Chairman BOEHLERT. Well, my bill, a bill to reauthorize it for the new fiscal year October 1, moves it back to FEMA from ODP. And ODP is very important, what they're doing, but, you know, they're thinking about the big—these natural disasters. Hopefully, prayerfully, we're never going to have another one in America. But if we do have one in the United States of America, it's unlikely to be in Whitesboro or Aurelius, it's more likely to be in, God forbid, New York or Los Angeles, where there are literally millions of people.

So the FEMA program has run in the first couple of years exceptionally well, as you all have testified to, and my experience is all change is not necessarily good. If something is working as intended, if it's serving the audience you're trying to serve, and we get this whether we're in New York or North Carolina or Texas or Oregon, people in the firefighting community say this program is too long in coming, finally it's here, and we like it, we're using it to good advantage and it's working well, don't screw it up, in blunt terms.

And so my pledge to you on the part of the Science Committee, which has jurisdiction, we're going to do our level best not to screw it up. It's working well, we want to keep it working well.

Is there anything any one of you might want to add for the record before we wrap this thing up? All right.

Just let me say to all of you, and Chief Quill, you know, that and David James—I think maybe he's gone—oh, DJ is still there, the chief up in Weedsport. Chief McQueen, you've been in Washington and so has Mr. Williams and Chief Tecomowitz (phonetic), everybody's been down. This hearing is just like we do in Washington. We get Members of Congress up here talking about a program in support, every program has its pluses and minuses, so we call in the experts like you to tell about your experience. And you have shared your experience with us, and it's mostly positive, but you have some constructive suggestions on what we might be able to do to make the program better.

So Congressman Miller and I will go back to Washington, there will be an official record of this hearing, the staff examines it carefully, it's shared with our other colleagues.

When we have these hearings across America, the taxpayer should be pleased to know we don't put 50 Members on a plane and fly them from here to there at taxpayers' expense. What we always insist on is that they be bipartisan; they're not political, we have got a Democrat and a Republican, and then we have witnesses who have real-life experience dealing with the subject matter before the Committee.

In our case, the Science Committee, we have Nobel laureates, we have people that we all would acknowledge are geniuses in their chosen field. Guess what, if there were a prize for public service, we'd give it to you, our first responders. You're geniuses in your field. And every single one of us in this audience have every reason to thank the firefighters of America, paid or volunteer, all professional, for which you do so well for us each and every day.

And on behalf of the Science Committee, on behalf of the Congress, I want to say to you and to your colleagues thank you very much. This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 2:21 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

Appendix:

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL FOR THE RECORD



*Focused on being
The Best Small City in New York State*

CITY OF AUBURN

Department of Fire
Michael D. Quill, Chief

July 19, 2004

The Honorable Sherwood Boehlert
Chairman, Science Committee
2320 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Boehlert:

On June 21st of this year, you held a field hearing entitled "The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program: A View From Upstate New York". During that hearing you asked specifically for information in regards to the following:

- In what ways has your department interacted with USFA and other agencies within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)? In your experience, how effective have these agencies been at delivering support through activities other than the fire grant program (i.e. training, education, outreach, etc.)? Please provide any recommendations you have for improving these activities within DHS.

Recently, Auburn's City Manager and I returned from Anniston, Alabama, where we attended the "WMD Incident Command Training Course". There is no way I could describe to you how impressed we were with the school. From the moment we arrived at the Atlanta Airport until departure, we could not have been treated any better. The staff at the housing area was incredible, always smiling and trying to be helpful. The instructional staff was outstanding in both knowledge of the subject and being able to train 50 students from varying backgrounds. The living conditions could not be improved upon.

Overall, it was a terrific experience. In my thirty years of Fire Service, I have never experienced a school like it.

My only recommendation is that schools like this continue. The training offered is a necessity for living in today's world. The staff and facilities at Anniston are the ideal place to distribute this education to the correct people.

Sincerely,

Michael D. Quill
Fire Chief

MDQ/lps